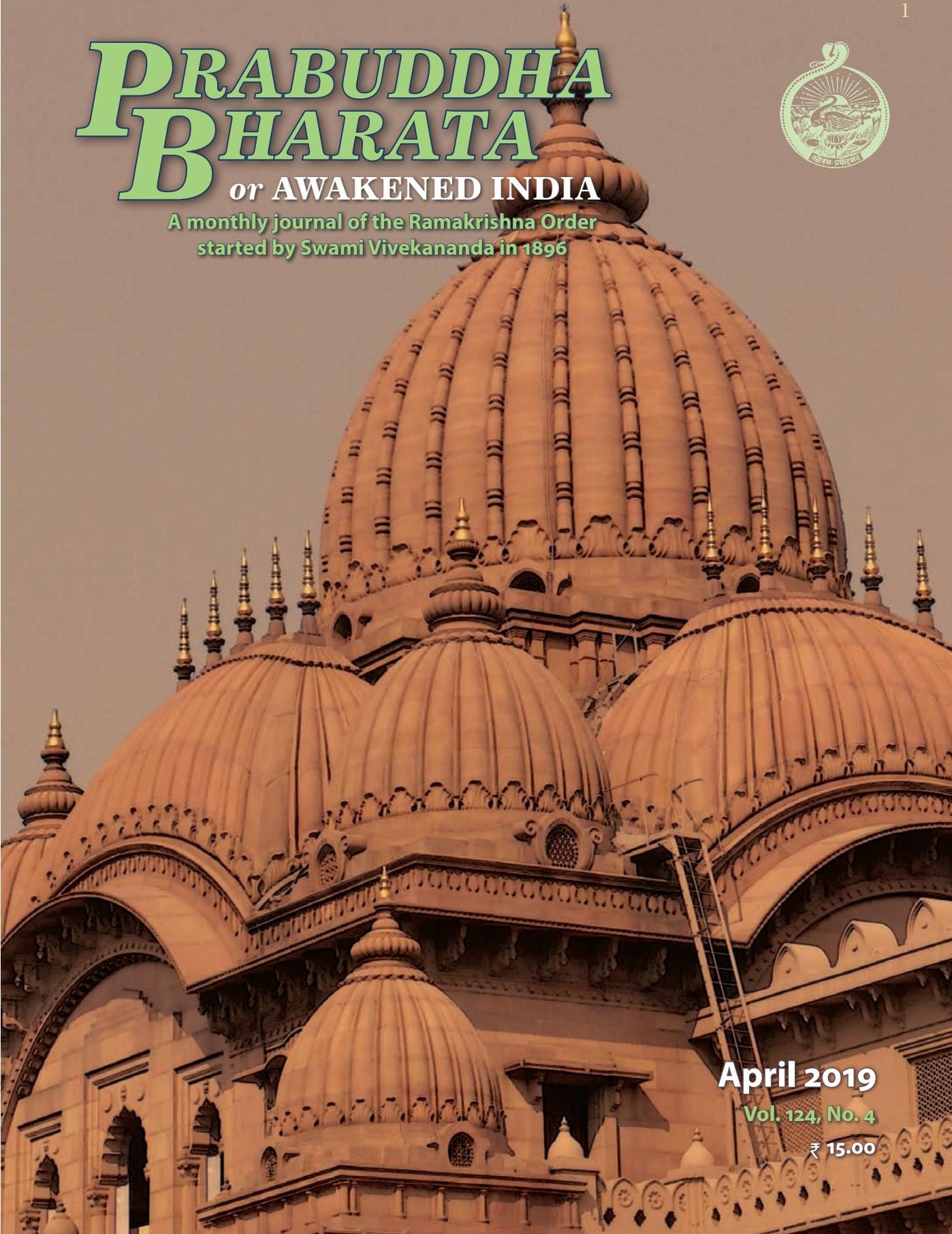


# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



April 2019

Vol. 124, No. 4

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# THE ROAD TO WISDOM

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON *Great Secret of Happiness*



We get caught. How? Not by what we give, but by what we expect. We get misery in return for our love; not from the fact that we love, but from the fact that we want love in return. There is no misery where there is no want. Desire, want, is the father of all misery. Desires are bound by the laws of success and failure. Desires must bring misery. The great secret of true success, of true happiness, then is this: the man who asks for no return, the perfectly unselfish man, is the most successful. It seems to be a paradox. Do we know that every man who is unselfish in life, gets cheated, gets hurt? Ask nothing; want nothing in return. Give what you have to give; it will come back to you—but do not think of that now, it will come back multiplied a thousandfold—but the attention must not be on that. Yet have the power to give: give, and there it ends. Learn that the whole of life is giving, that nature will force you to give. So give willingly. Sooner or later you will have to give up. You come into life to accumulate. With clenched hands, you want to take. But nature puts a hand on your throat and makes your hands open. Whether you will it or not, you have to give. The moment you say, 'I will not', the blow comes; you are hurt. None is there but will be compelled in the long run to give up everything. And the more one struggles against this law, the more miserable one feels. Be therefore not a beggar; be unattached. This is

the most terrible task of life! You do not calculate the dangers on the path. Even by intellectually recognizing the difficulties, we really do not know them until we feel them. Nature wants us to react, to return blow for blow, cheating for cheating, life for life, to hit back with all our might. Then it requires a superdivine power not to hit back, to keep control, to be unattached. Every day we renew our determination to be unattached. We cast our eyes back and look at the past objects of our love and attachment, and feel how every one of them made us miserable. We went down into the depths of despondency because of our 'love'! We found ourselves mere slaves in the hands of others, we were dragged down and down! And we make a fresh determination: 'Henceforth I will be master of myself; henceforth I will have control over myself.' But the time comes, and the same story once more! Again the soul is caught and cannot get out. The bird is in a net, struggling and fluttering. This is our life.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,  
(Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 2.4-6.



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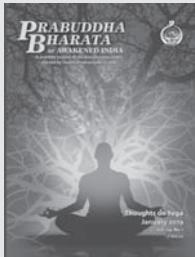
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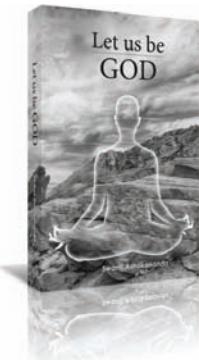
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The book's title was inspired by Swami Vivekananda's saying in his *Inspired Talks* and is as follows: 'The world for me, not I for the world. Good and evil are our slaves, not we theirs. It is the nature of the brute to remain where he is, not to progress. It is the nature of man to seek good and avoid evil. It is the nature of God to seek neither, but just to be eternally blissful. Let us be God!'

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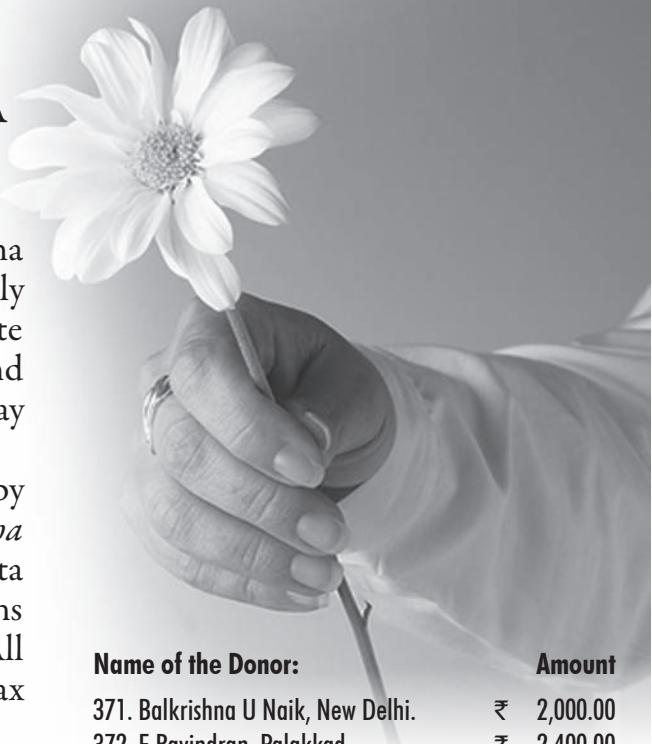
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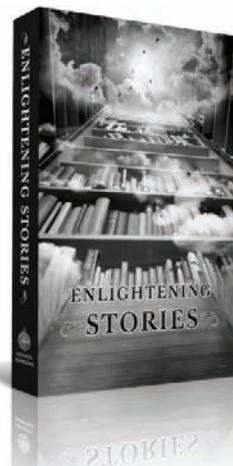
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***Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!***

## ***Maitrayaniya Upanishad***

April 2019  
Vol. 124, No. 4

### **मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्**

अथान्यत्राप्युक्तं यः शब्दस्तदोमित्येतदक्षरं यदस्याग्रं तच्छान्तमशब्दमभयमशोकमानन्दं तु सं  
स्थिरमचलममृतमच्युतं ध्रुवं विष्णुसञ्ज्ञितं सर्वापरत्वाय तदेता उपासीतेत्येवं ह्याह ।  
योऽसौ परापरो देवा ओङ्कारो नामनामतः ।  
निःशब्दः शून्यभूतस्तु मूर्धिं स्थाने ततोऽभ्यसेत् ॥

॥ ६.२३ ॥

*Athany-atravy-uktam yah shabd-as-tad-aum-ity-etad-aksharam yada-syagram tach-chhantam-ashabdam-abhayam-ashokam-anandam triptam sthira-m-achalam-amritam-achyutam dhruvam vishnu-samjnita-m sarva-paratvaya tadeta upasi-ty-eva-m hyaha.  
Yo'sau paraparo deva aumkaro nama namatah.  
Nihshabdah shunya-bhutas-tu murdhni sthane tato'bhyaset.*

(6.23)

And thus it has been said elsewhere: 'What is called the sound is the syllable Om. That which is its end is tranquil, soundless, fearless, sorrowless, blissful, satisfied, steadfast, unmoving, immortal, unshaking, enduring, called Vishnu; for obtaining what is higher than everything, let him worship these two.' For thus it is said: 'He who is both higher and lower, that God known by the name of Om is soundless and void of being too. Therefore, let one concentrate on the top of the head.'

(6.23)

# THIS MONTH

**D**OES INDIA NEED religious education? Is there any dearth of religious wisdom in India? Why are non-Indians persistent in teaching religion to the Indians? What was Swami Vivekananda's view on this issue. These points are examined in **Don't Teach Religion to India!**

A brief description of the lecture that Swami Vivekananda gave in Hiawatha, Kansas and the accompanying circumstances is given by Diane Marshall, graphic artist and art historian, Missouri, USA in **A Real Indian in Hiawatha**.

A proper attitude is necessary for doing spiritual practices and leading a spiritual life. This is discussed by Swami Pavitrananda (d. 1977), a former minister-in-charge of the Vedanta Society of New York and a former editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* in **Healthy-Mindedness in Religion**. This is an edited transcript of a talk he delivered at the Vedanta Society of New York on 7 April 1957.

Sister Nivedita, though born far away from India in an Irish-Scottish family, had completely identified herself with India. Inspired by Swami Vivekananda at the age of thirty, she made India her home, and till the end of her short life of forty-four, lived and worked among Indian people. She inspired a sense of Indian nationalism, worked for women's education and empowerment, revival of Indian art, promotion of Indian science, propagation of civic virtues, and relief in epidemics and famines. The story of this woman, who became a devoted daughter of India is told by Vinayak Lohani, founder of the

NGO Parivaar, West Bengal in **India's Daughter—Sister Nivedita**.

The **Harmony of Religions from the Perspective of the Bhagavadgita** is discussed by Kaberi Ghosh, language-specialist, School of Languages, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Kolkata.

The young have wonderful insights on various issues. In *Young Eyes*, such insights are brought to the readers every month. This month, Aadrika Chattopadhyay, a school student of class four from Apeejay School, Salt Lake, Kolkata, shares her thoughts about parenting in **How Parents Should Be**.

Many wonderful nuggets of wisdom contained in ancient scriptures are difficult to understand. In *Balabodha*, such ancient wisdom is made easy. This month's topic is **Vairagya**. Understanding this popular word is necessary to understand its meaning.

Some great people maintain their greatness till their last breath. Karna was such a great benefactor. His greatness is shown in the story **Sri Krishna and Karna**. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Anmika Kathaigal*.

John M Cooper, the Henry Putnam University Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University, general editor of the English edition of Plato's complete writings, author of *Reason and Emotion*, and *Knowledge, Nature, and the Good* has written the book **Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

# ***Don't Teach Religion to India!***

THE COLONIAL HANGOVER is not yet over. The previously colonised races are still living in the shadows of a dream-world of living that never was, a patronage of the all-powerful, all-knowing colonisers that never existed, and reminisce about the 'good old days' when everything was so smooth and easy, when everything had been taken care of by the all-merciful, all-compassionate colonisers, who had to 'sacrifice' so much to make themselves home in their colonies like India, where they were confronted with whatever their white bodies had never experienced before: dirt, poverty, illiteracy, a medley of confusion, so on and so forth. The colonised, in this case, the Indians, are living with the same image of themselves as the colonisers painted for them and maintained till seventy-two years ago. After they left, sincere and faithful Indians have taken up the baton and continue to worship this image of an intellectually, culturally, spiritually, and economically depraved nation. The strange part of this phenomenon is that even the millennials, for whom colonisation means nothing but a few pages of their history books, carry this image, rather cherish it.

Being emotionally and ideologically enamoured and in reality, being cowed down by the seemingly magical powers of the white colonisers, has caused serious damage in the past and is continuing to fragment and severely break the Indian national identity. The point of the present discussion, however, is the damage that this psyche has caused to the field of religion in India, both in theory and practice. Right from the beginning of the eighteenth century, some Western scholars

started studying Indian religions. Among these scholars were two main groups. One group was trying to learn from the ancient Indian wisdom

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### **India does not need Western religious preachers but Western benefactors.**

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contained in texts in different languages, primarily Sanskrit, but also Pali, and many other vernaculars. They unearthed manuscripts, made critical editions incorporating various versions of a text, transcribed and translated these texts, and did many other activities to start a tradition of Indology in non-Indian languages like German and English. The other group, on the other hand, did many of the works that the first group did, but with the ulterior motive of proving to the world that Indian religions were basically pagan, inhuman, and savage belief-systems and that the world was better off without them.

Gradually, scholars from either group understood that there was a great audience for all that they had to tell, if not outside India, then inside India, where even if there have been intermittent crises of resources, population has never been a resource in short supply! So, some of these scholars took to a completely devoted religious life, many of them turned monks and nuns, and lured Indians into following them, which was only natural given the penchant of an average Indian to drool over the white skin. But, is not all of this well in the spirit of the Vedas that knowledge, spiritual and secular, should be open to all and received from all? Yes, of course, this is in the

Vedic spirit. Only, if what happened was limited to this. Sadly, that is not the case.

The Western mind, particularly the American mind, is exceptional in organising and managing, as observed by Swami Vivekananda. Thus, when the Westerners started dabbling with Indian religious ideas, they made great academic disciplines and well-managed ashramas out of them. However, Swamiji also said that India's ideal was renunciation and service. If any person, Western or Eastern, takes to Indian religions and understands them in theory and in practice, through renunciation and service, they will imbibe the spirit of these religions, as did Swamiji's Western disciples. However, most Western minds have taken up Indian religious ideas, because they think that Indians are not worth these ideas, that Westerners can better manage and propagate these ideas.

This has led to a quite strange situation, where Westerners claim that Hinduism is not a religion proper, that yoga was never Hindu or Indian, that all that India could claim as Indian are some savage races, who always need enlightenment from the West. And of course, many Indians have started parroting these ideas, because the white person is always right! So, the Western mind now wants to teach religion to India! It started centuries ago with hordes of Christian missionaries coming to India to preach the gospel of salvation. Some of them though, had the wisdom to quickly realise that in India lived thousands of Christs, who were silent to the world. In his deliberations at the World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago, 1893, Swamiji told the West that India did not need Western religious preachers but Western teachers, who could give her lessons on managing society and earning livelihoods, and also that India needed benefactors, who could give her wealth. 125 years hence, not much has changed in kind, though appearances might show changes in degree.

India has lineage of rishis that continues till

today. The Western academia is now questioning the unidimensional thought systems of the West and is looking out for more inclusivism and broadness. At this juncture, is it wise to bash down millennia-old Indian faith-traditions based on some wisdom and perspectives that are only a few centuries old and have never seen application beyond a limited geography, where also they are beginning to cause strife and disturbance? Instead, the Western mind would do better to sit at the feet of the thousands of living masters of India, learn their wisdom, both in theory and practice, and become one with India, and then, if they have understood even one Indian tradition, just try to preserve it for posterity in non-Indian languages with the help of the organisational and technological skills that the Western mind naturally possesses. But, no word against India or Indian religions!

While it is true that Indian religions are divided into numerous sects and sub-sects and while it would be almost impossible for these factions to come to an agreement about any aspect of religious thought, all of them are Indian and all of them are striving hard to live the ideals they profess. Their focus is never on the empirical or the temporal, they are not bothered about the world or time. All of these spiritual aspirants are focussed on attaining the Divine, which each of them understands in a different manner. Contrast them with the average Western mind that hardly sees anything beyond the temporal and empirical even in places practising the spiritual. It makes businesses out of ashramas, organisations out of sects, and academic departments out of shastras. But, are not Indians also doing all of these? Yes, they are and to that extent all those Indians are primarily Western in their mindset.

India needs all-renouncing Indians focussed on the Divine, who can not only expound the *Brahma Sutra* but also experience at will, the Brahman this text talks about.



# A Real Indian in Hiawatha

Diane Marshall

**A**N UNSOLVED MYSTERY has long been associated with Swami Vivekananda's stay in Des Moines during November 1893. After his second lecture at the Central Church of Christ, the *Iowa State Register* reported that 'His dates west have been cancelled and he will speak on Thanksgiving night at the same place on "The Manners and Customs of India".'<sup>1</sup> Two days after he left town, the 3 December *Iowa State Register* reiterated that his stay in the city 'was happily prolonged by the cancellation of engagements farther west' (1.210). For an Iowa newspaper to state that Swamiji had been booked to speak 'west' suggests that the booking was to the west of the Iowa state line. The location of this cancelled venue remained a mystery until a few years ago. In 2014, I discovered that the cancellation location was Ottawa, Kansas—but that story must wait until the next issue. The matter at hand is a brief description of the lecture that Swamiji gave in Hiawatha, Kansas.

After his success at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, Swamiji received many invitations to lecture. Handling these requests must have been quite complex. Swamiji had no experience in this type of planning. I imagine that his Chicago hosts attempted to help him with these arrangements at first, but he did not wish to be a burden. Someone convinced him to sign with a lecture bureau, which could handle his bookings nationwide. A notice in the weekly *New York Dramatic Mirror* for 11 November announced that Swamiji had signed a two-year contract with the Slayton Lyceum



New York Dramatic Mirror, 11 November 1893, Page 7

Robert G. Ingersoll delivered his lecture, "The Gods," at the Chicago Opera House on the afternoon of Oct. 29.

Jennie O'Neill-Potter, the elocutionist, and Master George MacDonald, the "Highland laddie violinist," are to appear together in entertainments this season.

The tour of George Francis Train and Ben King is to be under the direction of H. B. Thearle.

Joseph Jefferson lectured recently on the principles of acting at the New Century Drawing Room of Philadelphia.

The Urania series of illustrated lectures are billed as an afternoon entertainment at Hooley's Theatre, Chicago.

The Chicago Rivals open courses in Chicago, Ill., on Nov. 10 and Nov. 21 and at River Forest, Ill., on Nov. 14.

Vivekananda, the East India orator, has signed a two years' contract with the Slayton Lyceum Bureau to appear on the platform. Vivekananda speaks the English language with fluency. He is tall, handsome and commanding in appearance. He has several popular subjects on the Manners and Customs of India; Buddhism; Hinduism; and The True way to Love God.

## LECTURE COURSE.

The Hiawatha Lecture Association reports the sale of tickets fully up to that of former seasons. The course for season of 1893-4 will commence Friday evening, Dec. 1, with a lecture by Vivekamanda, the famous Hindoo lecturer. Subject, "The Manners and Customs of India." Vivekamanda came to this country to attend the Congress of Religions at Chicago there creating a sensation. He speaks the English language with fluency and distinctness not surpassed by any American scholar or orator. He speaks at Des Moines, Iowa, for three evenings in succession and was engaged after being heard by the manager of the Des Moines Lecture Association. The pastor of the Christian church has received a letter from the manager saying Vivekamanda is a magnificent speaker. The association is fortunate in securing a man who made a great reputation here in such a short time.

Brown County World, 24 November 1893, Page 4

Bureau. Chicago lawyer, Henry Slayton, had represented many notable speakers such as Susan B Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and so by reputation, his agency initially seemed like a good choice. Swamiji was soon on tour, giving his first lecture outside Illinois in Madison, Wisconsin on 20 November. The next day he was in Minneapolis, and from Minnesota he went to Des Moines.

It did not take Swamiji long to realise that life under contract was not a convenience—it was an entrapment. He complained that Slayton had cheated him, but that 'cheating' would have been imposed impersonally, embedded in many caveats and loopholes in the small print of the contract. Slayton's Lyceum Bureau was not the only agency to impose tyrannical working conditions on its

speakers. Life on the lecture circuit was arduous and lonely. America's favourite speaker, Mark Twain, loathed the lecture tour.

Either the bureau did an especially inconsiderate job of scheduling Thanksgiving week or someone got their wires crossed. Swamiji arrived in Des Moines on 27 November and after speaking to an invitation-only gathering of the Tourist Club, he gave his first booked lecture that evening. On 21 November, he had written to Ellen Hale that he would be in Des Moines until the 29. According to the 24 November *Brown County World*, 'He speaks in Des Moines for three evenings in succession.' Exactly how Swamiji could speak for three consecutive evenings, and yet his stay be finished in two nights remains unclear. For the 29, Swamiji was slated to give a talk 280 miles away in Ottawa. It made no sense to go to Ottawa, come back to Des Moines, and then return to Kansas on 1 December to give a talk in Hiawatha—about 250 miles away. Travel-wise it was a gruelling schedule, with no break for the holiday, and no assurance of being with friends on his first Thanksgiving in America.

I am sure that Swamiji discussed his scheduling conflict with his Des Moines hosts. Reverend Harvey O Breeden was experienced in booking speakers, so he probably accompanied Swamiji to the telegraph office to straighten out the problem. A change of plan was declared during his second lecture at the Central Church of Christ: 'He has consented, it was announced last night, to remain in Des Moines a few days longer'<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps by way of compensation for staying longer, Rev. Breeden must have offered to let him speak at Drake University. Rev. Breeden was confident that Swamiji could be trusted as a speaker with students. The *Iowa State Register* said: 'Dr. Breeden thinks that a religion that cannot stand discussion, or being looked at

from the other side, is not of much account.<sup>3</sup> The opportunity to speak to college students was golden. Ottawa was cancelled. Swamiji was kept busy on the 29. That morning he talked to Drake students at their chapel assembly. During the day, he toured the Iowa State Capitol with Prairie Club members he had met on Tuesday, and later he attended a Wednesday evening baptismal service. 'The students enjoyed a splendid talk by Vivekananda yesterday morning. One of the charming characteristics of this Hindu gentleman is his willingness to answer any question regarding his religious views. His chapel talk was very much enjoyed and will be remembered by the fortunate students.'<sup>4</sup>

Swamiji seemed to get on well with Rev. Breeden and his wife Flora. It is probable that he was their houseguest and it is safe to assume that he shared Thanksgiving dinner with them, although he left no record about having partaken of the traditional feast. He lectured that evening at the Central Church of Christ on 'The Manners and Customs of India'. A report of the talk appeared in the *Des Moines Leader* on Friday, 1 December. Also on Thanksgiving Day, Des Moines had its first snowfall of the season, one foot deep by noon.<sup>5</sup> So the land was snow-covered when Swamiji departed Des Moines the next day—not to return to Chicago—but to go to Hiawatha, Kansas, where he had a speaking engagement that evening.

On 23 November the *Kansas Democrat* announced that the Hiawatha Lecture Association would open its 1893–4 season on 'Friday evening December 1st with a lecture by Virikananda [sic], the Hindoo lecturer'. And he was to speak on 'India, Its Manners and Costumes [Customs]'.<sup>6</sup> Swamiji's lecture was also announced in the *Brown County World* on the 24, spelling his name, 'Vivekamanda'; and in *The Hiawatha Journal* of 23 November spelling his name, 'Vorekanada'. The

### ***The Lecture Association.***

The Hiawatha Lecture Association have a very fine course arranged for the coming season, and the sale of tickets show that there will be as large a membership as last season. Their aim has been to make the course as different as possible from that of last winter, but Leland T. Powers has been engaged once more as a universal wish was expressed that he could be heard again here. In addition to Powers there will be four lectures and one concert, the Lotus Glee Club. The season of 1893–94 will open Friday evening December 1st with a lecture by Virikananda, the Hindoo lecturer who will take for his subject "India, its manners and costumes." Virikananda came to this country to attend the congress of religions at Chicago and proved himself while there to be a speaker second to no member of that body. He speaks the English language with a fluency and correctness not excelled by any American scholar or orator. He speaks at Des Moines, Iowa, for three evenings in succession and the manager of the lecture course there writes to the Rev. Campbell, who formerly resided in Des Moines, that he is a magnificent speaker.

### ***Hiawatha Lecture Association.***

The Annual Drawing of seats for season of 1893–1894, will take place at the Armory Hall Saturday evening, Nov., 25th. All ticket holders will please be on hand or instruct some one to select seats for them. Tickets will be collected for at once. Tickets will be on sale at the Armory on the eve of drawing or at Miner & Stevens' drug store.

CHAS. P. WASTE,  
Manager.

*Kansas Democrat, Hiawatha KS, 23 November 1893, Page 4*

*Journal* also related that Swamiji was to receive a fee of \$300 for his 4 December lecture in Chicago at the Central Music Hall. No doubt the fee was inserted into the Lyceum literature to impress prospective clients.

The last sentence in the *Democrat's* article is the most revealing about how Swamiji

came to be in Hiawatha: ‘The manager of the lecture course there [Rev. Breeden] writes to the Rev. Campbell, who formerly resided in Des Moines, that he is a magnificent speaker’ (*ibid.*). From what I can surmise, Rev. Campbell of the Christian Church in Hiawatha knew Rev. Breeden when Campbell was a student at Drake University in Des Moines. Long before the Parliament in Chicago added many new speakers to the lecture circuit, Rev. Breeden had established an outstanding seasonal lecture program in Des Moines.<sup>7</sup> Naturally, lecture clubs in other communities were eager to follow his lead. Therefore, personal referral played a part in Swamiji’s appearance in Hiawatha.

After reading Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s epic poem of 1855, ‘Hiawatha’, and seeing the delightful frozen Minnehaha Falls in Minneapolis, I imagine Swamiji felt favourably disposed to go to Hiawatha, but upon arrival, he must have been baffled as to why this tiny town on the plains called itself Hiawatha. It had no connection with the legendary Native American leader or with the writing of Longfellow’s poem. The town is located near the Ioway-Sac reservation, and in retrospect, it has been rationalised that there could be an Ioway language origin for the place name of Hiawatha: Hári Wáta, meaning ‘I am looking far away’.<sup>8</sup> The hero of Longfellow’s poem, however, was linked to the Onondaga and Mohawk people, and was therefore unconnected to local tribes. That distinction probably did not trouble the white founders of the town in 1857. The poem was popular enough to override tribal origins and justify its appellation to this spot in Kansas eighteen miles south of the Nebraska state line and about forty miles west of the Missouri state line.

In 1893, Hiawatha, Kansas was a small farming community with a population of 2,486, whereas Des Moines then had a population of 50,100. In 2016, Hiawatha’s census was estimated at 3,065.

The main street of Hiawatha is Oregon Street, named for the pioneer Oregon Trail. City Hall, at the intersection of Oregon and Seventh streets, is housed in the 1891 First National Bank building. The former bank with its turreted clock tower is one of several remaining brick structures in town that Swamiji may have seen. The Lawrence Building across the street is dated 1896. Near the turn of the last century Hiawatha’s streets would have been animated with farm wagons and horses, although the dirt roads might have been snow-covered on 1 December 1893.

In general, times were good for Hiawatha. The population had nearly doubled in the decade prior to 1893. The town was proud to be the seat of agrarian Brown County. Corn was the main crop of this part of Kansas. There was even a long poem praising corn in the 30 November 1893 issue of the *Kansas Democrat*. The lecture in Hiawatha was booked for the day after the Thanksgiving holiday. On its front page that day, the *Kansas Democrat* used an illustration of singing turkeys—probably lifted from an actual piece of sheet music. The song, ‘There’ll be only a few of us left’ was considered humorous and may have had the refrain, ‘Thanks to him who spared our living, We’re here, we’re here till next Thanksgiving’.

The Hiawatha Lecture Association held an Annual Drawing of seats for their lecture season in Armory Hall. The Armory at 315 Utah Street between Eighth and Seventh streets was only a block from the Missouri Pacific Railroad depot. Plans were underway to fix it up. ‘The advertisement curtain at the Armory stage is to be corrected and repainted and a new American flag background is to be added to the stage drops. Everything will be done to make the house worthy of patronage.’<sup>9</sup> The Armory had been built in 1883 by the members of Post 130 of the Grand Army of the Republic, all veterans of the Civil War. It was 50 feet wide by 130 feet

long, 'The boys one hundred and forty strong will rattle it up after the manner of Sherman's bridge building—in less than no time. When completed, the boys will get "The Spy of Atlanta" company to produce that play in the Armory, on a stage 30 x 50 feet.'<sup>10</sup> The wooden building no longer exists. The present National Guard Armory in Hiawatha was built in 1938.

As mentioned, there was about a foot of snow on the ground when Swamiji departed Des Moines and his train would have traversed barren snow-swept fields on the way to Kansas. The simplest rail route to Hiawatha would have been to go from Des Moines to St Joseph, Missouri and then transfer to a train stopping in Hiawatha. Swamiji could not have known when he alighted from the train in Hiawatha, that a bright spirit was missing from the station. 'Among all the little folks in town none was such a favorite as the sturdy little fellow who sold popcorn at the depot.'<sup>11</sup> Nine-year-old Harry Vaughn, who cheerfully supported his mother and sisters with his earnings, died suddenly of diphtheria on the 20th, and his older sister died two days later. Rev. Campbell conducted a very large funeral for him at the Christian Church as reported in the 30 November *Kansas Democrat*. Railroad men and citizens bore the expenses of the funeral for the boy 'who did nearly a man's work'. All the town's newspapers had sad stories about little Harry.

There was another noteworthy newspaper article that probably lay somewhere within Swamiji's reach that Friday, at the depot or his hotel lobby. The 1 December *Brown County World* devoted a full page in praise of John Brown, the radical Kansas abolitionist whose attack on the Harper's Ferry federal arsenal in Virginia was a precursor to the Civil War. Today, Brown would undoubtedly be labelled a terrorist—but he was a hero in Kansas. Swamiji probably did not realise that he had met one of Brown's secret

co-conspirators. Franklin B Sanborn, the social reformer who invited him to the Social Science Association convention in Saratoga Springs, NY had travelled to Kansas in his youth, studied with Brown, and resisted arrest by federal agents after Brown's execution. Additionally, Swamiji met poet Julia Ward Howe, famous for her stirring lyrics of 1862 to the 'Battle Hymn of the Republic'. Howe's lyrics were intended to elevate the popular Civil War marching song, 'John Brown's Body'. In 1893, Kansans still considered 'John Brown's Body' to be their 'state anthem'.

These items help frame the state of mind of the Kansans, who listened to a Hindu for the first time on the day after Thanksgiving, 1893. They had given thanks to the Lord in their churches and then feasted to repletion. Many were mindful of the poor and had pitched in to help Mrs Vaughn, the washerwoman, bury her two brightest children. The citizens of Hiawatha cared about education for their children, but by necessity, they cared even more about their corn and wheat crops. They recalled the cruel days of 'bleeding Kansas' preceding a great war that had cost many of them their fathers and sons. They considered themselves the champions of freedom for slaves, but their newspapers printed stereotypical racist caricatures of African-Americans, and the community observed the same segregation practices common in other parts of the country at this period.

*Kansas Democrat, Hiawatha KS, 07 December 1893, Page 6*

**Vivikenanda's lecture at the Armory Faiday evening was a very good one and was well received. The lecturer had a good many interesting things to tell about "The Manners and Customs of India" and told them in an entertaining manuer. Vivikenanda is a Hindoo monk of the Buddhist faith and wore his native monastic robes while speaking.**

Unfortunately, no detailed account of Swamiji's lecture could be found. A short report in the 7 December *Kansas Democrat*, which was a weekly newspaper, confirmed that he did indeed give a lecture in Hiawatha the previous Friday, and that it 'was a very good one and was well received'. They perceived Swamiji as 'interesting' and 'entertaining'. Americans of the period apparently saw no contradiction in labelling Swamiji as 'a Hindoo monk of the Buddhist faith'. Instead of fixating on the unusual colour of his 'gorgeous orange robes' as Chicago journalists had done, this local reporter simply relayed—as Swamiji must have explained it—that the garb he wore while speaking was the monastic dress of his country.

Swamiji successfully held his audience's attention with 'The Manners and Customs of India', which according to the *Iowa State Register* was 'to the popular mind' 'his most entertaining lecture'. After the talk, he usually invited a question and answer session. Inevitably, he had to field questions about Christian missionaries in India. Evidently, not all Hiawathans concurred with Swamiji's first-hand

*Kansas Democrat*, Hiawatha KS, 14 December 1893, Page 6

The city has been enjoying several first class lectures from noted speakers upon various themes of importance. It is a grand way for the many to profit by the careful reading and thinking of the few. But it is a pity and a shame when the many are called out to listen to heathen twaddle, especially when that twaddle is both insulting and contrary to facts. It is to be hoped the first lecture of the course is not an index of what is to follow.

assessment of missionary progress in his own country. Two weeks later, the *Kansas Democrat* printed a backlash opinion of Swamiji. Then as now, 'facts' were generally shaped by the bias of your choice:

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Three days after his Hiawatha lecture, Swamiji was in Chicago where he gave an acclaimed lecture on 'The Divinity of Man' at the Central Music Hall to an audience of 2,000.<sup>13</sup> By the time this comment was printed in the *Kansas Democrat*, he was on his way back to Minneapolis, invited this time by University of Minnesota students.

What had Swamiji said that rankled the *Democrat* writer so? Only the day before in Iowa, Swamiji had given the same lecture, 'The Manners and Customs of India', without offence. The *Des Moines Leader* gave a reasonable idea of its content, saying he delivered it in 'an off-hand and entertaining manner'.

'He told of the home life of the people and traced the career of the Hindoo boy and girl through early life, betrothal marriage, and finally death. The customs on each important event of life were clearly and entertainingly described.'<sup>14</sup>

That sounds very straightforward. Swamiji then discussed caste, using comparisons to trade unions and the then current exclusion of the Chinese.<sup>15</sup> He observed that wealth constituted its own caste in America, and informed that in India more social restrictions were placed on the higher castes than the lower. He also refuted

the usual tales of mothers throwing babies to crocodiles and devotees throwing themselves under the juggernaut car. The topics of suttee or sati and child marriage were also raised. There was nothing new in all this.

Swamiji spoke informally to another type of audience at the Prairie Club in Des Moines. His auditors were businessmen and politicians, and he tailored his remarks to the economics of Christianising Hindus. He remarked: 'The Christians will not help the heathen. They will help the Christianized heathen, but not those who remain true to their own religion. If I should become a Christian I could get a million dollars tomorrow for my school for the poor in India. But I prefer to earn the money by hard work.'<sup>16</sup> He also said that Indians needed to learn 'how to govern themselves, that they may be able to protect themselves against the English, who occupy and govern India' (ibid.).

Twice Swamiji dismissed the Biblical myths of Genesis and Noah's ark as a human invention, but this did not seem to offend Iowans.<sup>17</sup> None of these topics occupied his talk to the Drake students. His chapel talk seemed to centre on Vedanta and according to the report cited earlier, it was well received. The December issue of the student magazine *The Delphic*, however, wrote this analysis: 'The first half of his lecture was a philosophic argument for the infinite nature of the soul. The latter half was an attack on Christianity'.<sup>18</sup> How so? 'His philosophic terms served only as a disguise; his embracing of Christ was only a means through which he might approach nearer to his victim and make his thrust more deadly' (413-4). In other words, it did not matter what topic Swamiji broached. There is an ultra-defensive mindset in every ideology distrustful of any foreign concepts.

Just as the student editor of *The Delphic* perceived Swamiji as a Trojan horse, and was

In this city of churches where seven hundred people went out last fall to hear a heathen rage against christianity, and where money is raised every week to send out missionaries, the following from the New York Independent concerning Vivekananda will be interesting reading. Inasmuch as Vivekananda was the Hindoo who lectured here, the account will be doubly interesting to the people to know where and to whom then many went—inasmuch as this is a christian community. The Independent says;

Here is richness. A letter to The Pioneer, the leading English paper in India, is written from Chicago by Merwin Marie Snell, on the Parliament of Religions, and the story he tells is one that we had not learned from any other source. He tells the most astonishing stories of the popularity in this country as a religious teacher of Swami Vivekananki, the representative of Hinduism at the Congress, "the most popular and influential man in the Parliament," who "has been lecturing before large audiences in the principal cities of the United States, and has received an ovation wherever he went," preaching in Christian pulpits and satisfying the "hunger for spiritual truths" of those whom Christianity does not feed. The Parliament, he thinks, "marks an epoch in the history of religions." He says:

"One of its chief advantages has been in the great lesson which it has taught the Christian world, and especially the people of the United States, namely: that there are other religions, more venerable than Christianity, which surpass it in philosophical depth, in spiritual intensity, in independent vigor of thought, and in breadth and sincerity of human sympathy, while not yielding to it a single hair's breadth in ethical beauty and efficiency."

This is amazing for its palpable falsity and absurdity. We believe that the writer, who has a very alert mind, after trial of Evangelical Protestantism and Roman Catholicism has of late counted himself among the disciples of Hindu philosophy. It pleases us that even among the Hinduized Monists, Occultists and Theosophists, with whom he now finds himself associated, he discovers that "America is starving for spiritual nourishment;" and we are glad that if he has failed to find it in the lessons of faith and love taught by Jesus, he has been fed by Swami Vivekananda.

alarmed by the approbation Swamiji won with his schoolmates, similarly, the memory of Swamiji's performance—either his candidness or his charisma—stuck like a burr under the saddle of a writer for the *Hiawatha Journal*. On 24 May 1894 the paper printed this astonishing rant:

In this city of churches where seven hundred people went out last fall to hear a heathen rage against Christianity, and where money is raised every week to send out missionaries, the following from the New York *Independent* concerning Vivekananda will be interesting reading. Inasmuch as Vivekananda was the Hindoo who lectured here, the account will be doubly interesting to the people to know where and to whom then many went—inasmuch as this is a christian community. *The Independent* says;

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If the editors of the *Hiawatha Journal* or even the Christian New York *Independent* 'had not learned from any other source' of Swami Vivekananda's popularity, then that speaks volumes to their insularity. Seven hundred people had come



to hear Swamiji speak at Hiawatha's Armory. The *Morrill Weekly News* on 8 December reported that people like 'Clarence Yoder and brother, Chas. drove down to Hiawatha last Friday to attend a big lecture that took place there that evening' (*ibid.*). If the entire audience had been universally offended, Swamiji might not have made it out of town unscathed. I think, based upon Swamiji's performances elsewhere, that a sizable portion of the audience must have been reasonably impressed by the spirited acuity of his comments.

Over a century later, the editor's bias seems to jump off the page. His concluding sentence, intended to be sarcastic: 'we are glad that if he [Snell] has failed to find it [spiritual nourishment] in the lessons of faith and love taught by Jesus, he has been fed by Swami Vivekananda', might be taken positively today in the spirit of interfaith harmony. Today, Swami Vivekananda is considered one of the pioneers of the interfaith movement in North America. I wonder if this journalist was further confounded in November 1900 to learn that Merwin Marie Snell—still a Catholic and still a scholar of Hinduism—was bringing his broad-minded ideals to Kansas and founding a school, Albertus Magnus, in Wichita.<sup>20</sup>

The Hiawatha Lecture Association had aimed to make their 1893-94 lecture course 'as different as possible'—and in that, they succeeded. In hindsight, perhaps Ottawa might have appreciated Swamiji more. 

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## ***Healthy-Mindedness in Religion***

**Swami Pavitrananda**

in mind. They ruin their health. I do not deny that they are sincere in their efforts, but it is not a normal state. And if because of their foolishness or lack of common sense they deliberately want to be abnormal and to ruin their health, how can they develop spiritual life on that basis? It is the giving of too much importance to non-essential things. The following of a particular diet and routine—what to eat and how many baths to take for purification—becomes the criterion for being religious.

Jesus Christ was so sensible when he said: 'What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.'<sup>1</sup> Purification is not necessarily from the outside; it is from the inside. With a section of people in India, religion has become identified with what or how they shall eat. Many people there do not believe that a person living on a non-vegetarian diet can be religious. Swami Vivekananda with his virile personality said: 'Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking-pot, and our religion is, "Don't touch me, I am holy".<sup>2</sup>

That is one phase of life. And in all religions there are nonessential elements, which have become identified with essential elements, and many people are caught in that. In India, from the early Vedic days, there have been traditions for rituals. And there came a period when rituals were overabounding, so much so that people forgot the essentials of religion. Then came the

**I**T IS SAID THAT there is nothing so uncommon as common sense in religion. It is strange indeed. Religions aspire to the supernormal state; but there is no denying the fact that in many cases people become abnormal.

In India when certain persons all of a sudden develop a religious tendency, you can mark that they will take baths three times a day: in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. It is a tropical country. They will have infinite restrictions on diet: they will take up the vegetarian diet, and then place many restrictions on top of that; they will fast several times during the month, and so on. They become conspicuous; they develop a religious frenzy and become a source of inconvenience to others and of danger to themselves. They become, in many cases, morbid

Buddha with his keen intellect and mind. His was the religion of keen intellect, not that we get religious truths by intellect, but we must have keen discrimination to find out at once what is essential and what is nonessential. So he came as a saviour. Hinduism reacted by correcting itself and Buddhism also thrived. But, as it happens, everything is bound to decay. Buddhism declined. Followers of the Buddha would perform horrible spiritual practices; it was the worst period in Indian religious history. Nonessential things were being dealt with; the essential teachings of the Buddha were forgotten. Then came Acharya Shankara, whose mind was as keen as that of the Buddha. He saved Indian religion from going farther into degeneration.

So we forget that we must take care of the essential things, not the nonessential things. If we devote all our energy to nonessentials, we shall become abnormal. We shall become unhealthy in mind. But what is unhealthy-mindedness? Unhealthy-mindedness is when we do things abnormally, in a senseless way. Every human being, every animal has temperature. But when that temperature becomes too high or too low, it is a case of disease. It is not a healthy condition. In the same way, in our lives, when we give too much importance to nonessential things, or when we exaggerate the difficulties of life, it is not a healthy condition. Difficulties in life are bound to come; but when one sees life only in terms of difficulties, when one begins to enumerate the difficulties that will come tomorrow and the day after, and so on, it is a case of unhealthiness. It is a pessimistic, unhealthy state of mind, which thinks of life in terms of despair.

Optimism takes a sunny view of life. Of course, that also can be unhealthy. When we think everything is all right, when, without having real power within us, we think in terms of achieving a great thing which is beyond our

strength, we develop conceit, pride. That is also a case of un-healthiness. Though the outside temperature may be too high or too low, yet the body has its normal temperature.

As a small streamlet flows along, it sometimes gets caught in the sands and cannot go further. It goes underground. In the same way, one's life sometimes gets caught in the sands, and as it cannot go further it becomes a stagnant pool, giving out a bad smell; it is in an unhealthy condition.

This is true in all fields of life. Much more so is it true in religious life and therefore we should be much more on guard. It is truer in religious life because in that life we strive after perfection, we aspire to reach perfection. When we aspire to reach perfection, naturally we shall see our imperfections more clearly. The person who does not strive for any ideal does not know what is right or wrong. From one standpoint such a person is fortunate. One Christian saint—I think it was John Bunyan, the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678)—at one time in his life became so pessimistic that he would think that the animals, the trees, the birds, were better than he, because he was so sinful, he had so many imperfections. So he would think that it was a tragedy that he was born as a human being. He would think that the animals were much more blessed. Another person would think so much in terms of his sins that he would be afraid to go out. He felt as if the trees and plants knew the dark sides of his life. The 'temperature' was too low; it was not normal 'temperature'.

We strive after perfection—there is manliness in that—but why should we think so much of imperfection? By repeating things, we may exaggerate. If we have any resentment against anyone, and begin to speak about it in detail to each of our friends in good faith, the resentment grows stronger and stronger. We will be torn to pieces. In the same way, if we begin to take note

of all our weaknesses and imperfections, it is a kind of disease. Sensitiveness to conscience may also be a kind of disease. Some persons like to talk in terms of their weaknesses to others. It is a kind of bravado—they are frank enough to speak out about their weaknesses. Thereby they do harm to themselves. If we have weaknesses, we should pray to God to overcome them. Some religions tend to think only in terms of sinfulness. But why should we think of life in terms of dark forces? After all, who is more powerful, God or Satan?

What is the important thing in our life? In life, motion is the normal thing. Standing on the way is the abnormal thing, it is an aberration. To strive after perfection, to go towards perfection is the normal thing. Imperfection is an aberration, a mistake. In a tournament, some persons by might fall by chance; but if we fall and begin to weep and give a discourse on the philosophy of falling down, then we cannot go on. We are all human—one has one's weaknesses—but why should we think of life in terms of weaknesses? Just shake off the idea of weakness and strive ahead in life. It is quite natural that we should fall at some time in life and have hundreds of failures. But failures may become the pillars of success, at least in religious life. Indeed, religious life means the grappling with failures; in spite of all the obstacles one has to go on. And in religious life, as I said, because we strive after perfection, imperfections come too much into our notice and into the notice of others. When a cloth is white, the dark spots are seen. It is only natural. But it becomes unnatural, abnormal, unhealthy when we think in terms of those dark spots.

Perfection comes when we move towards it; imperfections do not go away when we take notice of them or hide them. We simply spend all our energy in fighting with the dark forces of life. Thereby, we do not get strength. We must

have something positive to give us strength: we must commit ourselves to the source of all strength. Otherwise, all our energy will be spent in vain; not much result will come. This is found in the lives of certain Christian saints; they put too much emphasis on the dark side of life. Certainly, in all religions there are people of this type. They do not find the real way, they do not get the right outlook; and therefore they spend too much energy that way, and so their lives become failures.

Yes, in religious life there is great struggle, but we must not forget that even in the lives of those Christian saints who had to suffer so much, afterwards there would be achievement, there would be success. That is the most important thing. But we do not know the whole of their lives, we have only certain records from their autobiographies. And we are fortunate to have these autobiographies in order that we may get an idea of their struggles—but that is not the whole picture. It is only one phase of their lives. What is the strength that sustained them in spite of all difficulties? That is what we have to find out. However great the struggle, at least certain of them succeeded.

And the struggle will be greater according to individual beings. In Vedanta it is said that we carry our past deeds with us. If one has done many dark deeds in one's past life, one has to pay the price for those and the struggle is greater. But that does not mean that life is a failure. We can improve, no matter how impure we may be. However many imperfections we have, we can remove them. That is the lesson from the lives of even those saints, who had to struggle the hardest. They struggled so hard sometimes that it does not seem sensible.

Some really were not sensible. Some saints, even when the weather was coldest and snow was falling, would come out in the open and pray

there, just to expose their bodies to the greater cold. Sometimes they did these things to control their minds, forgetting that to some extent the body affects the mind, and that by controlling the body, one cannot control the mind. The Bhagavadgita says that when you are sick your mind cannot think. That does not mean that you have control over your mind; at that time the mind simply cannot function. But some persons practice too much austerity to control the mind and so break down their health in body and minds. We must learn from their experience that striving for perfection does not mean controlling the body.

In India too, there are certain persons who give too much importance to these things, to the difficult side of religion. Some persons will go just to practise asanas, difficult postures. Some will be sitting with their arms up. But that is not real religious life, and sensible persons do not take notice of them.

Once, before I came here, I went to a religious fair. There was a person there who had been standing for fourteen years. Many people would go to see him. But what is there in standing for fourteen years? Does it have any connection with religious life? It attracts the notice of ordinary persons; but even in India, sensible persons do not take any notice of these things, they laugh at them. However, they serve as quite sensational episodes for the newspapers in the West. But as I said, in all religions such things can be found.

Religion means dealing with your mind, not with your body. Of course, to some extent the body should be taken care of, but the body is not the most important thing. And the whole thing depends upon your outlook. What is the goal of religion, God, or fighting with Satan? What is the nature of God? It depends upon how you look at God. God is not the God of anger. There was a time when people thought

that God was the God of anger, that God was the God of punishment, a criminal court judge taking notice of all one's sins. But if God is the God of love, then why should we be so afraid, why should life be full of so much hideousness, struggles which are hideous, though they might be for religious perfection? You can count upon God, upon God's love; you can count upon God's compassion, God's sympathy.

In Vedanta, though, God is spoken of in an abstract sense. The Vedantic idea of the ultimate Reality is absolute Existence, absolute Knowledge, and absolute Bliss. In the highest Ideal, about the highest Reality, the Upanishads do not talk in terms of God. The Upanishads talk in terms of the ultimate Reality. Meister Eckhart says the same thing. He says that the ultimate Reality is Godhead. When there was no creation, there was something; Eckhart says that was Godhead. When creation came into being, God created. Out of Godhead came the power, and when the universe came into being, we say God created these things. In any case, the Upanishads talk about the same idea. Let us compare: Eckhart lived in the fourteenth century BCE and the Upanishads were revealed something like two thousand years before the birth of Christ. But the essences are so similar.

So what is the nature of the ultimate Reality? The Upanishads say it is joy. In one of the Upanishads the question is asked: 'What is the ultimate Reality?' And the answer is given: 'From which the universe has come into being, by which the universe is sustained, and to whom the universe goes at the time of dissolution.' And the student asks: 'What is the ultimate Reality, what is its nature?' The teacher says: 'Go and do spiritual practices, then you will know.' The student does spiritual practices and comes back, but he cannot give the right answer. In the beginning he says, 'It is all matter', and afterwards

he says, 'It is mind'. After that he says, 'It is the vital breath', and so on. But each time the teacher sends him back to do more spiritual practice. And in spite of all his failures, he continues his struggle, and the last time when he comes to his teacher he says: 'From joy the universe comes into being, the universe is sustained by joy, and will go back to the state of joy.'<sup>3</sup>

The Upanishad says that if there were no joy as the fundamental basis of our being, nobody could go on in life. The whole universe would not exist, if at its core there were not the state of joy. Not ordinary joy, but bliss, the joy that passes understanding. So, though the Upanishads say that this world is unreal, and so on, they say that the coveted thing, the source of the universe, is joy. The ultimate Reality is blissfulness; it is all knowledge, all blissfulness.

Now, if we have a clear idea about the ideal, the struggle becomes easier. When we strive after joy, after a state of joy, then we can forget all the dark forces of nature, we can forget all the whisperings of doubt and despair in our minds. We are struggling for a certain thing, and when we know that the goal is there, that it is within the reach of all of us, then no amount of struggle becomes too much for us. We do not weep and wail. We know as a matter of course that difficulties will come on the way. Our whole thought goes towards the realisation of the ideal. And when our whole mind is bent on the realisation of that state, any amount of struggle, any number of dark forces, do not frighten us. At least, we can keep up the struggle. That is the normal condition. That is the normal attitude in religion.

Yes, that should be the normal attitude in every life. That has been the attitude of all, who have reached success in worldly life; it is so also in religious life. They think in terms of positive things. They think in terms of realising the

goal and therefore their struggles do not look hideous. It is a motion; they are striving to reach the goal. And sometimes it becomes much more enjoyable because of the struggle. We can wrestle with difficulties if our hearts are sure, if we have a healthy attitude towards life, if we know what our goal is, and that it is within our reach. Naturally, we could not struggle if we did not believe that the goal is within our reach. But this is within our reach, within our possibilities. That sustains us, the lure of the ideal, the grandeur of the ideal. And because the grandeur of the ideal is always within our sight, all our struggles do not seem to be struggles; they do not look so terrible, so dismal.

But when the ideal is not sure, when we do not know what we are striving for, then we are caught in the sands and life becomes hideous. Those persons in religious life, who have no clear idea of what they will achieve, who do not have the correct idea about the nature of God, or the nature of ultimate Reality, struggle too much, for their struggles are misdirected. Therefore, their lives become failures and they live in an atmosphere of uncertainty and despondency.

As I have said, the struggle becomes greater for those, who carry the results of misdeeds in their past lives. We should not say misdeeds, there was simply too much ignorance in the last life and their spiritual awakening did not come at all. For those who did spiritual practices in their past life, the struggle becomes less and less. But it does not matter even if we have a thick layer of ignorance, if we have nothing to our credit from the past. If we are sincere and earnest, we can squeeze hundreds of lives into one lifetime. In religious life the result is not always determined by quantity; it is determined by quality. By our earnestness we can achieve something, even if we have nothing to our credit from past lives. It depends upon sincerity and earnestness.

Now there is another thing. If one is fortunate enough to come into contact with a person who has realised the ideal, the struggle becomes easier. In the case of many persons who have had to struggle so hard in religious life and whose activities are misdirected, the difficulty is that they have not seen persons of realisation. If they come into contact with persons who have reached the ideal, then they can get a clearer idea of what to do and how to do it. In the Gita a most important question is asked: 'What is the nature of that person who has reached illumination? How does he act, how does he behave, how does he talk?'<sup>4</sup> From the persons who have known Truth or who have gone far ahead, at least we can learn how to economise our energy, how to turn our activity in the right direction, so that we may not have to waste our energy; we can get clear direction. In the lives of many saints we find that the struggle has been very keen. One reason is that they have not come into contact with persons who could give them the right directions, and therefore they have had to struggle alone with only faith in God. But when one has the right direction, the struggle becomes easier; and it does not take an unhealthy turn.

Thus in India great emphasis is laid upon the teacher. A real teacher is he who has known the Truth. One is indeed fortunate to have come into contact with such a teacher. From the days of the Upanishads, great emphasis has been laid upon that. Light only kindles light: spiritual light only kindles spiritual light. True, it is not always that we can find such a teacher. If there is one good teacher, there are many false ones. But much emphasis has been put upon finding the right teacher.

Even in those systems of spiritual practice where one has to struggle singlehandedly, there must be something upon which one can fall back emotionally when the struggle becomes very

great. For instance, in Buddhism, which does not mention much about God, but advocates personal effort, spiritual aspirants pray to the Buddha. In the monistic school of Vedanta one has to think in terms of intellect, in terms of philosophy, in order to reach the ultimate Reality, which is conceived as an abstract idea; and the struggle to realise that abstract thing becomes greater. How do those who struggle in that way sustain themselves? They think of God as Shiva, who is supposed to be the God of renunciation, and they pray to him. That has become the tradition.

What can one do when one does not have such a good teacher? As I have said, it is not always—in fact, it is rarely—that we meet a person who can give direct, first-hand information from his own experience about the path and about the goal. The next best thing is to get direction from the scriptures. And we can get the right direction from the scriptures when we are earnest and when we perform spiritual practices. We can better understand spiritual books, we can find real guidance from the scriptures, only when we are earnest and when we make an attempt in all sincerity to build up a spiritual life. Otherwise, all these things will become simply philosophical discussions, intellectual jargons. But religious life depends upon certain simple formulas, so it is said we live by faith. In Vedanta, and in the popular religions in India, they emphasise faith, and it is true, I believe, that all religions give great importance to faith. How does faith sustain us? When our faith becomes firm, then we can find a stimulus when we read the scriptures, when we read the sayings and the lives of saints.

Sometimes our whole religion depends upon some simple faith. Let us say, when we have become divided against ourselves and therefore our struggle has become greater. What is the nature of God? At once people will say God

is omniscient, God is omnipresent, and God is omnipotent. God is always present, God is all-knowing, and God is all-powerful. If we put it to ourselves—if God is all-present and knows everything, then God knows all our struggles. And if God is omnipotent, God must be more powerful than Satan. ‘So why should we be afraid? ‘God is all-knowing.’ ‘God is all-powerful.’ ‘God is all-present.’ The simple things that we repeat, that children write in essays: ‘The nature of God is ... !’ and so on. But it is true; it is the experience of saints. And if it is true, why does life matter? Why should we be afraid to continue our struggle? Why should our struggle become hideous? It will become healthy; it will become joyous.

And what is the teaching of saints? Christ said: ‘For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.’<sup>5</sup> What does it mean? It means that if we are earnest and sincere, then the struggle does not seem so hard. There is joy in it. The burden becomes light and the yoke is easy to bear. Eckhart said: ‘He yearns a thousand times more strongly for you than you do for Him.’<sup>6</sup> I quote these persons of different ages to show that the same essence is there. Spiritual life is not so hard if we give our spiritual practices the right direction, if we do them in the normal way.

In the Gita, we find similar thoughts. The Gita starts with the message to Arjuna, who is despondent. We all feel that way, especially in our religious life. We think it is a hard struggle, a long journey. As soon as we begin to start, and we think the result does not come, we are typical Arjunas, typically despondent persons. The first message of the Gita is: ‘Don’t yield to unmanliness. Go on with your struggle.’<sup>7</sup> And it concludes with the message, ‘Every action has good sides and evil sides. Offer everything to me, depend upon me and I shall take upon myself your burden’ (18.66). And in the middle

of the Gita we find one verse that says: ‘If you pray to the Lord with one-pointed devotion, then it becomes easy to realise the Lord, to reach perfection’ (11.54).

One might say: ‘I find I have so many weaknesses, so many frailties. How can I hope that one day I shall be able to shake them off?’ And it is natural that when we struggle for perfection, imperfections will be more and more visible to our eyes. The Gita answers that even a person who is considered to be the most wicked, the greatest villain, will get perfection in a trice, if one thinks of the Lord with earnestness. All darkness will go away at once. It is said, if you strike a match in a room, which has been dark for thousands of years, it will at once be lighted.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say his idea of God was the blissful Mother. Just see, we always think that we can count upon the love of our mother and the blissful Mother is all joy. When a person would come in dejection to Sri Ramakrishna, he would say: ‘She is your own Mother. Just as the child has a claim upon the love of its mother in all circumstances, we have a claim upon the love of the blissful Mother, so why do you worry?’ That is the right attitude, the normal attitude in religious life. That is what is called healthy-mindedness in religion.



## References

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3. See *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Chapter 3.
4. Gita, 2.54.
5. Matthew 11:30.
6. Meister Eckhart, ‘How a Man Should Work in the Most Practical Way’, *Eternal Birth* <<http://gurdjieffclub.com/en/articles-essay-meister-eckhart-eternal-birth>> accessed 26 February 2019.
7. See Gita, 2.3.

# **India's Daughter—Sister Nivedita**

**Vinayak Lohani**

## **Sister Nivedita (1867–1911): A Sesquicentennial Tribute**

SISTER NIVEDITA, who though born far away from India in an Irish-Scottish family, had completely identified herself with India, loving and serving the country in ways few have done. Inspired by Swami Vivekananda at the age of thirty, she decided to make India her home, and till the end of her short life of forty-four, lived and worked among Indian people. Her contributions were diverse, ranging from inspiring a sense of Indian nationalism within Indians, to women's education and empowerment, revival of Indian art, which then hardly had any self-awareness of its own artistic traditions, promotion of Indian science, propagation of civic virtues and the citizen ideal, as well as working as a hands-on humanitarian in epidemics and famines. The story of this woman, who became a devoted daughter of India, is one of the remarkable tales of courage and conviction in one's calling, selflessness, and above all, complete dedication.

### **Her Life before India**

Nivedita was born Margaret Noble, in 1867 in Dungannon, County Tyrone in Northern Ireland. Both her father as well grandfather were Wesleyan priests. Margaret's early life was spent in considerable deprivation. At ten she lost her father and studied in a charitable institution at Halifax in North England. When seventeen, she began working as a teacher to take care of her mother and younger siblings. She taught in many different places in England as well as

Wales, and by twenty-five started a school of her own in Wimbledon. She had made a name for herself as a respected experimental educationist, based on the ideas of Swiss educationist Johann Pestalozzi and his German disciple—the father of the kindergarten concept—Friedrich Froebel, which were then just beginning to spread across the West. Her success in this field, as well as writing abilities on themes of early childhood education and women's issues, brought her in touch with the intellectual *crème de la crème* of London largely through the membership of the Sesame Club founded by Lady Ripon. There she developed many new friendships and listened to stalwarts like Thomas Huxley and G B Shaw.

For someone who rose through her social ranks after long years of struggle and finally had everything going for oneself, advancing on the same trajectory for making lives of oneself and one's immediate family more comfortable would have been the expected course. But Margaret's life was to undergo a life-transforming event that was to change her entire future course. It was when she was invited through the social circle of the Sesame Club to a tea-talk at a select private gathering on a cold Sunday afternoon in November 1895 to hear a young thirty-two-year-old 'Indian Yogi' who had made a considerable reputation in America in the preceding two years. Margaret had great devotion for Christ but many other Christian doctrines she was finding untenable with science. In her pursuit for deeper meaning, she had studied natural sciences, as well as Buddhism but deep within she pined for greater fulfilment for her inner being.

This man was Swami Vivekananda, who impressed upon her mind some deep ideas like the essential purity and nobility of the humankind, and its oneness, lifting up Margaret's mind. His thoughts were universal with a human being at its centre, as also his assertion that the time had come for nations to exchange their ideals just as they exchanged commodities. 'It had never before fallen to my lot to meet with a thinker who in one short hour had been able to express all that I had hitherto regarded as highest and best,'<sup>1</sup> was how Nivedita felt about the first time she heard him. His message was based on what she regarded as the best and highest in human nature, and his words too were a call to action for serving suffering humanity—an invitation for sacrificing one's life for the good of others. This was what, he said, the earth's best and bravest were born for. She recounted later: 'I had recognized the heroic fibre of the man and desired to make myself the servant of his love for his own people. But it was his *character* to which I had thus done obeisance. As a religious teacher I saw that although he had a system of thought to offer, nothing in that system would claim him for a moment, if he found that truth led elsewhere' (10). After listening to Swamiji a few times that year and again the following year when Swamiji returned from America, Margaret became a dedicated volunteer for him. It was then he suggested that he had plans for the women of his country in which he thought she could be of help. That moment she knew she had found the calling of her life. She was signing up her whole life for a mission that had a high degree of uncertainty in unfamiliar conditions.

### ***Arrival in India and Training under Swamiji***

Margaret arrived in India in January 1898 and for next nine months got intensive training from Swamiji who inspiringly opened the magical

maze of India before her. On 25 March, Margaret received *diksha*, spiritual initiation, into a life of spirituality and service. Her life was offered to India by her guru and was given the name 'Nivedita', the 'offered one'. They also undertook a journey for five months across northern and western parts of the country where ideas on religion, history, geography, ethnology, poured out of her Master's lips in an inexhaustible stream, and the manifestly powerful feeling that he had for his country made way into the deepest chambers of Margaret's heart. She later recounted:

There was one thing, however, deep in the Master's nature, that he himself never knew how to adjust. This was his love of his country and his resentment of her suffering. Throughout those years in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed. True, he was a worker at foundations. He neither used the word 'nationality', nor proclaimed an era of 'nation-making'. 'Man-making', he said was his own task. But he was born a lover, and the queen of his adoration was his Motherland. Like some delicately-poised bell, thrilled and vibrated by every sound that falls upon it, was his heart to all that concerned her. Not a sob was heard within her shores that did not find in him a responsive echo. There was no cry of fear, no tremor of weakness, no shrinking from mortification, that he had not known and understood. He was hard on her sins, unsparing of her want of worldly wisdom, but only because he felt these faults to be his own. And none, on the contrary, was ever so possessed by the vision of her greatness (40-1).

In India, she knew she had found her soul's home and destiny.

Nivedita also noted that Swamiji's fascination was with all phases of India's history and with all the diverse elements, which were interwoven in its tapestry:

In these talks of his, the heroism of the Rajput, the faith of the Sikh, the courage of

the Mahratta, the devotion of the saints and the purity and steadfastness of noble women, all lived again. Nor would he permit that the Mohammedan should be passed over. Humayoon, Sher Shah, Akbar, Shah Jehan, each of these and a hundred more found a day and a place in his bead-roll of glistening names (42).

After this initial phase of learning and exposure, Nivedita settled to live and work in the Bengali neighbourhood of Baghbazar in North Calcutta, an area Europeans hardly ventured into. In November, she started a school at her place—16 Bosepara Lane—for girls from orthodox families, where child marriage was widespread and girls hardly educated. She firmly believed that an ideal education for Indian girls should combine the traditional Indian values epitomised by the 'family ideal' along with developing of a world view with history, geography, and science—which she considered as the 3Rs of Modern Education—forming the core of the 'citizen ideal'. It was a wider identification with the community and nation at large, founded on deep empathy with the people of the country, which Nivedita envisaged for the Indian woman and youth of the future. 'Efficiency to all the circumstances of life, this womanhood before wifehood, and humanity before womanhood, is something at which the education of the girl must aim, in every age,' she wrote.<sup>2</sup> On the foundation of the 'family ideal' and moving towards the larger ideal of 'nationality' is a constant refrain in Nivedita's writings and she fervently wished the countrymen develop this ideal. 'The centre of gravity must lie, for them, outside the family. We must demand from them sacrifices for India,' she wrote (4.348).

In June 1899, Nivedita travelled to America in Swamiji's company. She again got ample opportunity to hear Swamiji's deepest thoughts on issues ranging on an astonishingly large canvass during the sea voyage. She was increasingly

feeling that her Master's teachings were so vast and sweeping that she needed a definite reference point in order to put them into action. It was during this time when Nivedita realised that what India needed most immediately for its overall regeneration was the self-awareness as one nation and take control of her own destiny by freeing herself from the oppressive foreign rule.

Swamiji passed away in 1902. Having lost the one, following whose footsteps she had come to live in a land, not of her birth, she could have very well decided to go back. But she was made of sterner stuff and with steely resolve, she stayed put, always being aware of the responsibility of carrying out her Master's ideas and wishes in the sphere of national awakening.

### ***Her Call to the Nation***

Re-gathering herself, she began to give shape to the future direction of her work—translating her Master's ideas of 'man-making' into 'nation-building'. All her efforts in diverse domains were to bring about a certain conception of 'nationality', that was the term she used, to India, in the hearts and minds of the people. What she meant by 'nationality' was people feeling for the land as their 'spiritual home', and identifying with it in a way that it becomes an essential part of the individual's self-concept, indeed an extension of one's own self. This was a higher basis of 'nationality' that she thought could not come from the mere political view of the nation based on the citizen-state dynamic. That to Nivedita was the starting point for any national consciousness. She wrote in a letter to a friend: 'The whole task now is to give the word "Nationality" to India—in all its breadth and meaning. The rest will do itself. ... It means a final understanding of the fact that the political process and the economic disaster are only side-issues, that the one essential fact is realisation of her own Nationality by the Nation.'<sup>3</sup>

She wrote profusely on the theme of Indian nationhood, knowing that to be her chief task. Nivedita held that no story of its analysed fragments, racial, lingual, or political, could ever be the story of India. She thoroughly believed that India was a synthesis with great strands of unity. She, in fact, thought that the British were quick to understand the underlying unity of the country and thus could put it under a common administration. She relentlessly attacked the idea that it was the British who had united India: 'If India had no unity herself, no unity could be given to her. The unity which undoubtedly belonged to India was self-born and had its own destiny, its own functions and its own vast powers; it was the gift of no one.'<sup>4</sup>

From a teacher of a few girls, she was set to become the sister, guide, and servant of the whole country. She plunged into a whirlwind of activities, contributing towards myriad aspects of national awakening and infusing new energy and vision in all she came across. Nivedita's Baghbazar quarters had become a rendezvous of sorts for eminent Indians of the time like Tagore, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Gokhale, Aurobindo Ghosh, and a large number of her young admirers who included revolutionaries as well as budding artists and intellectuals. Though she was not much in agreement of the mild petitionary methods of the Moderates, she had a close friendship with national workers across the spectrum. To meet her, in Gokhale's words, was 'like coming in contact with some great force of nature'.<sup>5</sup> The great Tamil nationalist poet Subramaniam Bharati, who had met Nivedita only once, considered her as his guru and 'as one who taught him to love his country'. She also imprinted on his mind lofty ideals of conjugal love and womanhood, which also made Bharati a champion of women's empowerment in his later life.

In 1905, the major event of the Partition of

Bengal galvanised the national consciousness in an unprecedented manner. Through her writings and lectures, she gave full support to the efforts of the Swadeshi campaign and urged people to go all out in this 'Swadeshi-sadhana'. Her own work with girls and women gave full expression to the practice of 'Swadeshi'.

Nivedita was one of the pioneering practitioners of the idea of worship of the nation as a mother. Following the Partition of Bengal when the government prohibited the singing or chanting of 'Vande Mataram', Nivedita continued it as a part of her school's daily routine. She passionately advocated the idea of worshipping the nation-mother. 'Dedicate some part of every *puja* to this thought of the Mother who is Swadesh', she said.<sup>6</sup> She held Hindus and Muslims as children of the same mother and in her writings and speeches exhorted them to create together the Indian nation of the future.

She was possibly the first person to have conceived and designed an emblem and flag for the country in 1905. And for that, she chose the *vajra*, the thunderbolt. The *vajra* had a long history in Indian tradition symbolising the 'power of selflessness', starting from the Puranic legend of Rishi Dadhichi, who had sacrificed his bones to create a weapon for the gods, the invincible *vajra*. The *vajra* remained an important symbol in Buddhist traditions too. In Nivedita's design, there are two *vajras* crossed in order to signify coordinated and selfless actions of multiple individuals of the nation acting in effect as one national organism. Nivedita got some designs embroidered by the girls in her Calcutta school and had it displayed in the exhibition organised by the Congress in 1906 in Calcutta. Some eminent Indians like Jagadish Chandra Bose, who later made it the emblem of his Bose Institute in Calcutta, started using it, and this idea was again reflected in the design of

the Indian national award for greatest valour in war, Param Vir Chakra.

### **Art, Science, and Literature**

Nivedita played an instrumental role in championing the cause of the Tata Institute, later the Indian Institute of Science, when the British Government under Curzon had scuttled the proposal given by Jamshedji Tata—which itself was an outcome of discussions between him and Swamiji—of creating such an institution of higher research in sciences and humanities through his own philanthropic initiative. Outraged at this, Nivedita wrote extensively in Indian as well as British press, meeting high officials and rallying the support of some of the world's best minds like the eminent American psychologist and philosopher William James and the great Scottish polymath Patrick Geddes. Her more direct and intensive involvement for more than a decade was with the pioneering Indian experimental scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose, for whom she not only organised a steady stream of funds for research but also edited and helped in writing four of his important books that took his work to a broader world audience, at a time when he faced continuous discrimination at the hands of the British scientific establishment.

Nivedita always had a sharp critical mind on art, developed right from her early days of schooling and she had made a deep study in museums across Europe and visited several ancient sites of India like Sanchi, Bodha Gaya, Ajanta-Ellora, Udayagiri-Khandagiri, Sarnath, and so on, making her well-steeped in knowledge of artistic traditions of both India and the Occident. She played a very crucial role in inspiring Indian artists to rediscover the roots of their own artistic traditions at a time when their artistic practice was largely informed by the traditions of the West. In this her efforts along with those of E B Havell, principal of the Government Art School

in Calcutta, and Abanindranath Tagore led to the flourishing of what came to be known as the Bengal School of Art, which influenced a whole new generation of young painters like Nandalal Bose, Asit Haldar, and Suren Ganguly. Nivedita was at the forefront of attacking the then prevalent Western claim that it was Hellenic art that had inspired Indian art and that there were no proper Indian artistic traditions before that.

Nivedita was a prolific author and published more than half a dozen books in her short lifetime on themes of Indian history, Indian womanhood, education, nationhood, art, mythology, and her study of Swamiji, and published several booklets and scores of articles in Indian as well as British press. These writings now come in the five volumes of *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, and provide an insight into her brilliant mind.

### **A Many-Faceted Gem**

As a humanitarian Nivedita manifested the highest capacity of sacrifice for serving those in suffering. Putting her life at significant peril, she served the distressed on many occasions like during the plague outbreak in Calcutta in 1899 and the great East Bengal famine of 1906. She suffered from a severe malarial attack after her work and stay in the famine-struck countryside of East Bengal, taking months to recover, with her health getting impaired permanently. Rabindranath Tagore, who had seen her from close quarters and had 'felt her tremendous power', later remarked:

She was in fact a Mother of the People. We had not seen before an embodiment of the spirit of motherhood which, passing beyond the limits of the family, can spread itself over the whole country. ... When she uttered the words 'Our People', the tone of absolute kinship which struck the ear was not heard from any other among us.<sup>7</sup>

Swamiji had inspired many in his life, founded a monastic Order, which is still serving the distressed and propagating the universal ideals he cherished. But among all his disciples, Indian and foreign, Nivedita's life is unique. First, she charted her independent path and undertook many activities that the Ramakrishna Order founded by Swamiji, and nurtured by his brother-disciples, could not have ventured into. With her vast intellectual and creative powers, she understood Swamiji's social and futuristic thoughts more comprehensively than most others understand and could suggest means of translating them in various aspects of Indian life. Indeed, she was the first one to see Swamiji's significance in world history and potential of his ideas for future and had the power and insight of interpreting the same to Indians as well as to the West. This is best reflected in her greatest work *The Master As I Saw Him* and also in the 'Introduction' to *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, which itself is a powerful résumé of Swamiji's life-mission.

As a lover of India born outside India, she was also unique in the way that she had no trace of any airs of Western superiority and was probably the first Westerner to have made her life completely Indian and seeing things entirely from Indian perspective. Nivedita was an epitome of the 'world worker', a term she herself used, not in the sense of a globe-trotting professional that we now see, but more in humble spirit of someone contributing in whatever little way in any part of the world, knowing, to use Tagore's expression, to light a lamp in any corner is to add to the illumination of the whole world. Tagore's actual expression is: 'Let us be rid of all pride and rejoice at any lamp being lit in any corner of the world, knowing that it is a part of [t]he common illumination of our house.'<sup>8</sup>

Nivedita spent her whole life as an attestation

of the trust her Master had reposed in her. She had made herself completely one with the Indian people and identified with the whole of Indian past and dreamt and worked for a much brighter future. Indeed, a British journalist, who knew her well had described her as 'India-intoxicated.'<sup>9</sup> On her beads, she was known to repeat 'Bharatvarsha' as the mantra. The central theme of her life was to make the Indian people self-aware of their nationhood and express it in various aspects of national life. Each Indian should live for the country's sake and hold oneself as an offering to Mother India was her constant thrust. Like her Master, who passed away at thirty-nine, Nivedita too exhausted herself and with a broken health passed away in Darjeeling on 13 October 1911, a fortnight before she could complete forty-four. At the place of her cremation in Darjeeling is an inscription saying, 'Here reposes Sister Nivedita who gave her all to India'.<sup>10</sup> Few would ever deserve the description more befittingly. ☸

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## ***Harmony of Religions from the Perspective of the Bhagavadgita***

**Kaberi Ghosh**

THE WORD 'BHAGAVADGITA' consists of two words, 'Bhagavad' and 'gita', the 'gita' of 'Bhagavan' or the 'gita', which has been sung by the lord. 'Bhagavan' is the lord and 'gita' literally means sung. In many English translations, Gita is named as the 'lord's song'. That is the literal translation of the word 'gita'.

Sri Krishna gave some secret, universal, and inspiring teachings, some life-giving wisdom,

which were sung or conveyed by him. As in a song, different notes blend together to create some tune or harmony, which is why, it is called a song or *gita*, similarly, the Gita notices different ideas and practices prevalent during those days. Gita is an attempt at the reconciliation of different religious creeds, none of which is slighted in it.

One of the supreme ideas in Sri Krishna's

message is the harmony of different ideas—the reconciliation of different paths of dharma. A person has to interact with people at different levels. One deals with people higher than oneself, equal to oneself, or lower than oneself. One is in different modes at different times or one is in different gears at different points of time. One should be able to synchronise the various inputs and to create harmony among different people at different levels.

Harmony implies reconciliation or tracing non-contradiction among a number of persons having divergent opinions or ideologies. This may be applied to a piece of music with different notes issuing from several instruments, yet synchronising and harmonising to give rise to a melody pleasing to the ears and soothing to the soul. They together make an orchestra and create a musical concert as against jarring or discordant notes having an unsettling effect on the mind, that is working at cross purposes. Briefly, music inspires the hearts of all global citizens, who have become great workers, lovers of humanity and harmony.

Sri Krishna has opened the floodgates of spiritual knowledge and attainment to all men and women, irrespective of sex, caste, or colour: 'Mam hi Partha vyapashritya ye api syuh papayonayah, striyo vaishyas-tatha shudras-te api yanti param gatim; women, vaishyas, member of the trading class, engaged merely in agriculture, shudras, those belonging to the labouring class, and those that are born of the womb of sin such as the pariah, who are devoid of Vedic study, take refuge in him, worship him, they, too, attain the supreme goal.'<sup>1</sup>

His all-protective hands hold everything animate and inanimate, pointing refreshingly to the unity or homogeneity and plurality, a key feature of a holistic world view: 'Mayi sarvam-idam protam sutre mani-gana iva; there is

nothing else besides me, Arjuna. Like clusters of yarn-beads formed by knots on a thread, all this is threaded on me' (7.7).

*Mayi*, in me; *sarvam*, all; *idam*, this; *protam sutre*, on a thread; *mani-gana iva*, like pearls. *Mani* in Sanskrit means 'bead', 'pearl', or 'gem'. They come in different shapes, colours, and sizes. All gems are strung together on a thread or yarn, form a necklace or garland, and become 'one'. The beauty of the gems is visible but the invisible string holds them together. Without the string, the *antaryami*, the indweller, the gems fall out loosely.

The world is made up of different people of different races, cultures, religions with variable visible attributes. The principal thread that sustains them together, without which, they cannot exist, is the divine inner Self, God, which cannot be seen by the physical eye. One needs the special eye of knowledge, the spiritual knowledge, which opens the eye of the ignorant to realise the principle that God is the sustaining force of the universe.

The Gita teaches us how to achieve harmony with divinity in the midst of disharmony by subduing all outward energies and remaining in equanimity with pairs of opposite like pain and pleasure, aversion and attraction, success and failure, and so on.

In all mystical literature—Christian, Sufi, Hindu, Buddhist—all people are one with the Divine. That is their goal. For example, the citizens of India, are all separate from the sensory point of view but belong to 'one' republican state. In the *Antaryami Brahmana*,<sup>2</sup> the supreme Divine as the *antaryamin*, 'the inner Self of all', regulates everything from within. This divine inner energy manipulates all the processes in the universe.

That is the one ultimate Reality expressed by Sri Krishna. This idea of universality,

non-separateness, made India a land of universal sympathy, a land of toleration and acceptance. Even today, the world is searching for this very vision of human unity and harmony.

### Hindu Synthesis

Hinduism combines both philosophy and religion, reason and faith. Hinduism is one of the most ancient religions of the world, also called Sanatana Dharma, which is nothing but a set of truths seen in every religion. This eternal religion deals with eternal verities, which are true and which can be tested and verified. It describes the web of customs, obligations, traditions, and ideals—dharma. Sri Krishna interpreted the old ideals in a new light to make them suitable for the condition of life in society and to give it a further push towards progress and perfection: '*Paritranaya sadhunam vinashaya cha dashkritam, dharma-samsthapanam-arthaya sambhavami yuge yuge*; I appear from age to age, to make religion invulnerable by the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of the evil-doers and for establishing dharma, righteousness, on a firm-footing' (4.8).

The great religions of India, namely Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, are the immortal products of the Hindu, Aryan race. Hinduism is the religion of ancient Aryans, who were the original inhabitants of India and later came to be known as Hindus. Thus, being the foundation and living source of some great religions, Hinduism occupies a unique place among the religions of the world. Swami Vivekananda said: 'You must remember that humanity travels not from error to truth, but from truth to truth; it may be, if you like it better, from lower truth to higher truth, but never from error to truth.'<sup>3</sup>

The freedom of thought helped the Hindus to evolve harmonious outlook, the spirit of

seeing unity behind variety. This harmonious outlook is noticeable in the field of religion: '*Ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti*; to what is One, sages give many a title'.<sup>4</sup> The Hindus have therefore accepted different religions, systems of philosophy, and spiritual cultures as being suited to different temperaments. Sri Krishna was a great harmoniser of ideals and institutions; he did not reject any of the ideals extant at the time, but gave a proper place to each one of them.

The purpose of religion is to make the world a better, peaceful, pure, and happy place to live in for all. Sri Krishna says: '*Ye yatha mam prapadyante tamstathaiva bhajamyaham, mama vartma-anuvartante manushyah Partha sarvashah*; as all surrender unto me, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows my path in all respects, O son of Pritha'.<sup>5</sup> This verse is an important milestone on the road of harmony between one religion and another religion. All human beings follow Sri Krishna's path from all sides. By whatsoever way, people worship him. Even those people who neglect him, Sri Krishna doesn't ignore them. The worshippers of other gods, devotees from different religions walk in his path—the path of devotion to him alone, for he alone is worshipped even through other gods. Thus, the Gita is the sealing achievement of the Hindu tendency, incorporating various religions.

Hindus understand religion, as a term that encompasses wide aspects of religious and traditional thoughts and is more suitably used for 'religion'. Religion saved the Hindu society from total disintegration. The most notable contribution of Hinduism to the world of religion is the unique principle of 'unity in diversity', synthesis of many religions.

Sri Krishna and Christ, both see the deity in themselves. While talking of himself as God, Sri Krishna says: 'None can go a day out of my path. All have to come to me. Whosoever wants to

worship in whatsoever form, I give him faith in that form, and through that I meet him. ... His heart is all for the masses' (4.11).<sup>6</sup>

Sri Krishna also says whenever evil and immorality prevail on earth, he will come down and support humankind. In the very first speech Swamiji made at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, he cited the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita: 'Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me' (1.4). Sri Krishna says: '*Yo yo yam yam tanum bhaktah shraddhaya-architum-ichchhati, tasya tasyachalam shraddham tameva vidadhamy-aham*; whatever celestial form of deity, an image of himself, a devotee craving for some worldly object seeks to worship with faith, I stabilise the faith of that particular devotee in that very form. Concerning that form, the inner Ruler makes that devotee's faith firm.'<sup>7</sup>

Further: '*Sa taya shraddhaya yuktas-tasya-aradhanam-ihate, labhate cha tatah kaman-mayaiva vibitan hi tan*; endowed with that firm faith, the devotee worships that particular deity and obtains through me, without doubt, his desired enjoyment, coveted by himself' (7.22). Those deities who are under the inner Ruler's control, are but the forms of the inner Ruler.

The tendency of the Hindus is not to destroy but to harmonise everything, not to antagonise any new idea that comes to India, rather to harmonise it. Sri Krishna, one of the incarnations of God, preached first: 'I am the God incarnate, I am the inspirer of all books, I am the inspirer of all religions'.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the Hindus do not reject any religion and the complete reconciliation among the different religions was fully accomplished by Sri Ramakrishna as he realised and explained that religions are not contradictory to one another.

The Hindu synthesis under discussion emerged

during the early classical period, 200–300 BCE, of Hinduism. According to Alf Hiltebeitel, a period of consolidation in the development of Hinduism took place between the late Vedic period, c. 500 BCE, and the period of the rise of the Guptas, c. 320–467 BCE, which he calls the 'Hindu synthesis'.<sup>9</sup> It developed in interaction with other religions including atheistic religions like Jainism, Buddhism, and so on.

Due to the similarities in the teaching of the Gita and the New Testament, the Gita can be called the 'Bible of Hinduism'. The Gita taught people to see in differences, the same truth in various garbs.

According to Hinduism, the goal of religion is all-round and the highest development of human personality. This religion is based on philosophy and Hinduism believes that all the world religions reveal the truth of supreme Reality and the mystery of human life in different ways and they constitute different approaches to the supreme Truth, which comes through experience, not through words. When people gain that knowledge and practical experience, they are considered wise. With the experience of the highest spiritual Truth, they go beyond the Vedas, the Koran, the Bible.

Sri Krishna, therefore, exhorts humankind: '*Sarvadharman parityajya mamekam sharanam vraja, aham tva sarvapapebhyo mokshayishyami ma shuchah*; give up all these paths and struggle and take refuge in me. I will make you free from all sins, be not afraid'.<sup>10</sup> Religion is meant to give support to people in times of stress. All people should study scriptures regularly. There is no bar of sex, caste, or religion. The readers of all the scriptures will hear the echoes of the Gita.

According to the concept of the Divine that one has, one takes refuge in the lord. Surrender to the lord is the result of supreme strength. Such surrender is not natural in our day-to-day life.

When we are weak, our confidence wanes, when everything seems to be lost and hope has fled, when one's dependence on one's own strength has been crushed down, life seems a hopeless ruin, then we surrender. The Christian, the Muslim—all do this.

### **Harmony of the Four Yogas**

Gita's message of harmony is manifest in different areas including philosophy, the 'Gita' philosophy, which considers only human welfare, nothing sectional, communal, limited, and parochial. That is the yoga taught by Sri Krishna.

Yoga is union, union of individual self and the supreme Self. Different persons have different inclinations, different aptitudes, different capacities, and different capabilities of body and mind. For this reason, the same path may not be suitable for all.

Swamiji's theory of 'universal religion' is applicable here: 'Again, these methods must be various. Seeing that we are so various in our natures, the same method can scarcely be applied to any two of us in the same manner. ... Take any path you like; follow any prophet you like; but have only that method which suits your own nature, so that you will be sure to progress.'<sup>11</sup>

There should be harmony between what people do, what they think, and what they speak. Yoga aligns the two things or two entities: body and mind establishes harmony between the two and brings about relaxation of both. The Gita offers various paths to help people arrive at the same goal and recommends a harmonious combination of the four yogas: jnana, karma, bhakti, and raja yogas. Though the predominant one gives the name to a particular path, the other three are combined with it. For example, devotion, bhakti, in its path, is combined with the other three. To strengthen the main spiritual current, the aspirant must

have a knowledge of the nature of *ishvara* and its glories, after which, devotion is possible. Then the spiritual aspirant has to offer all of one's actions to the lord, worship the lord through the performance of his duties.<sup>12</sup>

Perfect peace is essential as it enables people to give up their whole body and mind as an eternal sacrifice unto the lord who has given his devotees refuge. 'Name, fame, good deeds, "[Sanskrit]" etc—whatever sacrifices you perform, whatever penances you undergo, whatever you eat"—surrender everything to his feet.'<sup>13</sup>

Yoga of the Gita comprehends both dimensions of human life—outer life and inner life—and advocates the right attitude, which takes away the stress and makes the mind peaceful and harmonious, both upstream and downstream, internally in the mind and externally in the outside world. There should not be any gulf between secular life and religious life; if there is any, the gulf has been bridged by Sri Krishna as the Gita doesn't advocate any parochialism. Sri Krishna says: '*Buddhiyukto jahati-aha ubhe sukrita-dushkrute, tasmat-yogaya yujyasya yogah karmasu kaushalam*; endowed with equanimity, one sheds in this life both good and evil. Yoga is equanimity, indifference to success and failure.<sup>14</sup>

There is a unique feature of Gita's teaching, where spirituality is defined as efficiency in work. Gita here defines a combination of productive efficiency without and spiritual efficiency within. Skill in action lies in the practice of this yoga. Yoga is efficiency or dexterity in action. Working for worldly welfare also includes inner development. 'With regard to Karma-Yoga, the Gita says that it is doing work with cleverness and as a science; by knowing how to work, one can obtain the greatest results.'<sup>15</sup> A calm, peaceful, and pure mind can bring the best out of any action. The work then becomes divine.

While discussing Gita's message of harmony among the four yogas, we must remember the two classifications of religion. First, the ethnic classification, for example, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and so on. Second, the scientific classification: *jnana*, *karma*, *bhakti*, and *raja* *yoga*. Here, Gita deals with the scientific classification of religion, cutting across all the ethnic differences and limitations.

*Jnana*, *karma*, *bhakti*—all combined—create or suggest an integrated yoga of the Gita. Sri Krishna had referred to this: *jnanam vijnana-sahitam*—*jnana*, knowledge, along with *vijnana*, day-to-day experience. A real *vijnani* is one who has experienced the philosophy of religion. Sri Krishna says: 'Tesham satata yuktanam bhajatam pritipurvakam, dadami buddhiyogam tam yena mam upayanti te; on those ever united through meditation with me and worshipping me with love, I confer that yoga of wisdom through which they attain me.'<sup>16</sup>

In the delineation of the four yogas, Sri Krishna enunciated the fundamentals of spiritual life and thereby made it possible for the Aryan, later Hindu, faith to assimilate the alien cultures and religions within its fold that brings about 'unity in diversity'.

Gita recommends harmonious blending of the four yogas, which would result in all-round development of human personality. Through his lectures on the four yogas—*jnana*, *karma*, *bhakti*, and *raja* *yoga*—Swamiji sought to energise the dormant Indians to claim their strong identity.

### **Socio-Religious Harmony**

Most Eastern religions like Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism advocate retreat from the active world and emphasise curbing of needs. Sri Krishna preached the harmony of such religious ideals. The different racial and ethnic groups in the country were stamped with their different

traits into an integral society, much like a cauldron. Good moral ideas are put and blended here. As a result, a very good integral society of an all-India character will come out with people endowed with moral values. Peace and harmony will reign in this land.

Sri Krishna did not reject the fourfold division of society but accepted it as God-ordained: '*Chaturvarnyam maya shrishtam guna-karma-vibhagashab, Tasya kartaram-api mam viddhy-akartaramavyayam*'; the four castes of society, namely, brahmana, kshatriya, vaishya, and the shudra, were created by me and they are classified according to one's qualities and actions. And although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the nondoer, being unchangeable' (4.13). The castes are classified according to perennial qualities and fitness to live a particular mode of life suitable to serve the society in a particular way by performing their duties with faith and devotion. The simple religion of faith and devotion to the lord always opened the gate of liberation to the devotees irrespective of caste, sex, and religion on an equal footing and made life smooth both for the individual and society as a whole. The spirit of harmony is the fundamental note in the message of the Gita. From this point of view, all apparent contradictions are resolved. Accordingly, the various rituals, ceremonies, and books, which are the means of arriving at the point, are all right.

Sri Krishna says: '*Na buddhibhedam janayet ajnanam karmasanginam, joshayet sarvakarmani vidvan yuktah samacharan*; the knowing one must not despise the condition of those who are ignorant, nor should the knowing one destroy the faith of the ignorant in their own particular method, but by proper action lead them and show them the path to come to where one stands' (3.26).<sup>17</sup> The wise person should go down to the

level of the ignorant and gradually bring them up. This powerful idea must be the ideal of India.

There are different paths to reach God, automatically different groups of people are formed. Each group will try to support its own as the best path. They forget that the final goal achieved is the same for all. The path taken will usually depend on the mental make-up of a person. Religion, caste, and social status should not dictate one's relation with others. All are the same.

In society, the self-centred privileged class deprives the less privileged class of the way, which should be open to all in an integrated society. Here the former enjoy their monopoly in society and they do not want the latter to come up to the same level of their knowledge. As a result, the less privileged ignorant people get confused and fail to gain the knowledge of the highest spiritual truth. In order to get rid of their confusion: 'The wise man, himself steadily acting, should engage the ignorant in all work' (5.264) and bring them up. Gita not only teaches to check the flight of wise people in the present and in the future. It is more relevant to check the rot in the present-day society. It aims to check the fall and descent of a person and help one to rise and ascend. Sri Krishna advises communicating the good ideas to others waiting to receive it. In society, communication is essential to establish harmony between its members.

The Hindus say that the Gita is nothing but 'a way of living' for the welfare of society by purifying individuals in society and making them self-controlled and peaceful persons, who are bound to be harmonious people. They have a sense of altruism and are therefore competent to harmonise the interests of other members of the society, so that friction or disharmony does not obstruct the path of progress in different spheres of life. The whole world is a 'global

village' now and the interests of all nations are harmonised here.

### **God—Personal and Impersonal**

All religions agree that God, the ultimate Reality, the energy source, is within you. To realise God, one must remove the veil of ignorance with the help of self-knowledge. The ultimate Reality is both personal and impersonal, even beyond both, according to the Gita. This Infinite is beyond any limits, which can never be an object of finite knowledge.

Sri Krishna says: '*Jneyam yat-tat-pravakshyami yajnatva-amritam-ashnute, anadi-matparam Brahma na sat-tan-na-asad-uchyate;* I shall speak of that which is to be known, by realising which one attains immortality. The supreme Brahman is without any beginning. That is called neither being nor non-being.'<sup>18</sup> That beginningless supreme Brahman is the object of positive statement, is said to be *sat*, being, and that which is the object of negation, is expressed as *asat*, non-being. But Brahman is different from both of these, for it is not an object of finite knowledge.

Sri Krishna says further: '*Sarvendriya-guna-abhasam sarvendriya-vivarjita, asaktam sarvabhruti-chaiva nirgunam gunabhoktri cha;* shining through the functions of all the organs, yet devoid of all the organs; unattached, and indeed the supporter of all; without quality, and the perceiver of qualities' (13.15). It is the perceiver of the various sense-objects—the sight, smell, and so on. It manifests all the sense-organs together with their functions and is yet 'devoid of all senses'. The Upanishads say: 'Without hands and feet he moves fast and grasps, he sees without eyes and hears without ears.'<sup>19</sup> That knowable, is without attributes, without qualities like *sattva*, yet is the protector of all qualities like *sattva*.

As the Gita stresses on the ideal suited to the vast majority of humankind, the personal God is more prominent here than the impersonal. The personal God is called *ishvara*, omniscient, in the Gita, the formless aspect with attributes. The personal and the impersonal God are not different.

Sri Krishna says: ‘*Bahirantashcha bhutanam-acharam charam-eva cha, sukshmatvat-tad-avijneyam durastham chantike cha tat*; existing outside and inside all beings; moving as well as non-moving, it is incomprehensible due to subtleness. So also, it is far away, and yet near.’<sup>20</sup> It is without and within all beings. It alone is all beings, constitutes both moving or unmoving, animate or inanimate creation. It is incomprehensible, not capable of being definitely known. To the ignorant, it is far, as though thousands of miles away, being beyond Nature, Prakriti, that is subject to change. To the wise, it is near, at hand.

The Upanishads say: ‘*Tad-ejati tan-naijati tad-dure tadv-antike, tad-antarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasya-asya bahyatah*; it moves and it moves not, it is far and again near. It is within all this, and again it is outside of all this.’<sup>21</sup> Sri Krishna says: ‘*Avyaktad-vyaktayah sarvah prabhavanty-aharagame, ratry-agame praliyante tatra-ivavyakta-sanjnake*; with the coming of day all manifested things emerge from the Unmanifest and when night comes they merge in that itself which is called the Unmanifested.’<sup>22</sup> All embodied beings, the moving and stationary beings emanate from the Unmanifest—Brahma’s subtle body—at the commencement of Brahma’s day; at the commencement of his night, they merge in the same subtle body of Brahma known as the Unmanifest.

Sri Krishna says further: ‘*Jnanena tu tad-ajnanam yesham nashitam-atmanah, tesham-adityavaj-jnanam prakashayati tatparam*; but in the case of those of whom that ignorance of

theirs becomes destroyed by the knowledge of the Self, their knowledge, like the sun, reveals that supreme Reality’ (5.16). Ignorance makes people see the partial truth. Their said ignorance gets destroyed by the knowledge of the Self. This wisdom, the knowledge of God, manifests the nature of the infinite lord as the sun destroys the darkness, manifests all things, and reveals the Supreme.

Arjuna tells to Sri Krishna: ‘*Param Brahman param dharma pavitram paramam bhavan, purusham shashvatam divyam-adidevam-ajam vibhum*; you are the supreme Brahman, the supreme light, the supreme sanctifier. You are the the eternal divine Person, the primal God, the birthless, the Omnipresent’ (10.12). God is the supreme Eternal, the greatest purifier; all the seers speak of him as the eternal divine person, the prime Deity, unborn and all-pervading, everlasting or eternal Being, likewise resplendent, shining and self-effulgent Being, the primeval Deity, the origin of the gods, birthless and omnipresent. God is the ultimate resort, the supreme abode or refuge.

Those who take refuge in God and strive for liberation know the supreme Brahman, the Impersonal, through the grace of the lord. When God is not involved in the creation, God is Impersonal, beyond thought. Sri Krishna says: ‘*Pita-aham-asya jagato mata dhata pitamahah, vedyam pavitram-omkara rik sama yajureva cha*; Of this world I am the father, mother, ordainer, and the grandfather; I am the knowable, the sanctifier, the syllable Om as also Rik, Sama, and Yajus’ (9.17). God is the sustainer and the ruler of this universe, its father, mother, and grandfather, the knowable, the purifier, the sacred syllable ‘Om’, and the three Vedas, Rig, Sama, Yajur.

The whole *Mandukya Upanishad* expounds the word ‘Om’ and correlates it with our three states of consciousness, waking, dream, and deep

sleep. Every religion that developed in India has 'Om' as the supreme name of Divine. The *Guru Granth Sahib* begins with Om, the supreme Purusha is Om. The Buddhists, the Jains, and the Hindus highly respect this symbol of Divine. The Western students of Indian literature are very devoted to the symbol 'Om', which has gone beyond India.

The whole philosophy of the Gita is selfless universal work with a sense of unity. Today's society is international, not national. But the present situation in the world, where people are often facing family break-ups, social evils, and political unrest—all are due to increasing insatiable individual desires. It is due to forgetting the universal truth of oneness.

The Gita is especially suited to combat the present unlimited restlessness, to inculcate global vision, and bring about universal brotherhood, which is essential in spiritual progress. As a universal scripture, Gita turns a person from a state of agitation and confusion to a state of complete vision, inner contentment, and dynamic action.

The Gita has a tremendous appeal as it deals with human problems in a human way. Today, it casts its spell on millions of people including the great and extraordinary personalities—thinkers, writers, scientists, and philosophers like Mahatma Gandhi, B G Tilak, Sri Aurobindo, Albert Einstein, Dr Albert Schweitzer, Hermann Hesse, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Aldous Huxley, Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, Annie Besant, Robert Oppenheimer, Sir Edwin Arnold, and Thomas Carlyle, across various parts of the world.

In the present-day world, people need much broader harmonies, such as harmony of religions, harmony of ancient and modern, harmony of the East and the West. The human being, a microcosm, has to find one's own peace

and harmony of the mind, a new balance and harmony amongst oceans, mountains, glaciers, rivers, forests, the crest of the earth, and the beautiful world of animal species.

Swamiji's theory of the universal religion: 'No one form of religion will do for all. ... No man is born to any religion; he has a religion in his own soul. ... Each life has a current running through it, and this current will eventually take it to God.'<sup>23</sup> It has no name, no location. It runs through various religions. The Gita is the appropriate example here. The Gita emphasises the root conception of humanity, which is neither ancient nor modern, which belongs neither to the East nor to the West, but eternal and universal.



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12. See Gita, 9.27.
13. *Complete Works*, 6.346.
14. Gita, 2.50.
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18. Gita, 13.13.
19. *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, 3.1.19.
20. Gita, 13.16.
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# YOUNG EYES

## ***How Parents Should Be***

**Aadrika Chattopadhyay**

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**M**OST PARENTS keep on nagging children, hit them or shout very badly at them because they don't study or eat but, truly does this way really work? The answer is no. Hitting, shouting, or nagging does not really work. That is because most children do not understand the value of studying or eating healthy food. The easiest way to make the child understand is to speak lovingly and gently to the child. If a child is hit or shouted at too often, then the child becomes frightened and terrified of the parent who did so. If a child is nagged too much, then the child gets irritated and starts behaving badly. So, parents should not nag children. They should just say whatever they want to once and must repeat it again only if it is necessary.

Parents should support their children and not pressurise them because well, many times parents forget that children are small and they like to laugh and play and if they don't do so they become sad, cranky, and are unable to focus on anything. As all parents want their children to do very well in their studies, it is also important that parents support in physical play and also in little school programs like plays, school concerts, if their children want to, because sometimes a child may feel like participating in some school projects.

A parent must never lie to one's child, because that will make children have complete trust on

them and not only that, that will make children understand that their parents trust them completely, and if they lose their trust, then they can never have it again. If ever parents do not want their children to know something, but the child asks that, then do not lie, just say that the child cannot know that.

Sometimes when children do not listen to their parents, then parents get angry and say, 'I will not speak to you', but parents don't realise that when they do not speak to their children, the children feel like they are being badly ignored by the ones they trust the most. And not only that, if children want to ask their parents something about their studies or anything important, and do not get the answer, then that could affect their studies or cause even something worse.

When a parent buys a chocolate or any other thing a child likes and refuses to give it immediately to the child after telling her or him about it, then the child gets excited about it and starts nagging the parent, who has bought it. When that happens, the parent, who is being nagged, can get irritated and starts to shout at the child and also tells her or him that she or he will not get the chocolate or whatever that thing is. When that happens, the child feels sad. It is like she or he just nagged the parent, because she or he wanted the chocolate or some other thing, and could not control the excitement of getting it. So, it is better not to tell the child about the

chocolate or such thing and just give it when the parent thinks it is right.

Sometimes, when something goes wrong, then parents tend to blame their children for it. Just because a child is a child, it does not mean that it is the child, who has done the wrong thing, it could even be an adult. When children nag about going out alone, parents come under pressure and say yes, but they forget the safety rules. Parents should never forget their child's safety. Parents should tell their children to be careful and also defend them when something goes wrong.

Children should also be taught the different values of life and should not only be taught that marks are everything, because they are not. Marks matter a lot to an extent. Marks are important for a child's career, but a child should also be taught about the values of love, friendship, health, and things like that. A child should never be told that she or he cannot be anything, because that is not true. It also ruins the confidence to do something great. Not only that, but it also makes the child feel low,

because if you know that the one you trust the most is thinking that you cannot do anything in life, there is no chance to be something great at all. Instead, a child should be supported to fulfil her or his dream and should be given the help to do so.

Parents also get confused about giving their children electronic gadgets, they think that children will misuse it and will fall into danger. That is not true, because if a child is told what to do and what to be careful about, a child will do so. Besides, many things could be learned from Google and many other things like that. Parents should also buy their children fiction and nonfiction books. They should also tell their children to read. Parents should not keep on buying their children expensive clothes and should buy them what they need. Parents should also stop telling their children all the time what to do, because as a child grows up, it is important that parents let their children grow up, and have their own private space. If that is not done, then children will not like it and also they will not become mature enough.



## Vairagya

THE WORD *vairagya* is a commonly used Sanskrit word. It is used by people, who do not even know Sanskrit, as it is present in almost every Indian language. The widely used meaning of the word *vairagya* is dispassion or renunciation. However, it is necessary to see the other meanings and the origins of this Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word *vairagya* is derived from the word *viraga*, which in turn is derived from the root word *ranj* by adding a *vi* prefix and a *ghain* suffix. *Viraga* means change or loss of colour, excitement, irritation, aversion, dislike, indifference, indifference to external things or worldly objects, the faulty suppression of a sound in pronunciation, or a particular high number. *Vairagya* is the state of having *viraga*. Thus *vairagya* means change or loss of colour, growing pale, disgust, aversion, distaste for, loathing of, complete freedom from all worldly desires, indifference to worldly objects and to life, or asceticism.

*Vairagya* is considered to be one of the four qualities necessary for a spiritual aspirant. The quartet of these qualities are called *sadhana-chatushtaya*, the quartet of *sadhana*. The other three qualities are *viveka*, discernment; *shama-adi-shatka-sampatti*, the sextet of the wealth of virtues beginning with *shama*, calming of the mind; and *mumukshutva*, the desire for *moksha*. The quality of *vairagya* has been emphasised as

very important, particularly at the beginning of a spiritual or religious life.

All major texts of the Sanatana Dharma, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism emphasise the quality of *vairagya*. Intense *vairagya* leads to one's progressing faster on the path to attain spiritual liberation, *moksha*. Such a person is freed from the cycle of transmigratory existence or repeated births and deaths, and becomes one with the ultimate reality, *Brahman*. *Vairagya* can be practised by any one, irrespective of one's station in life and irrespective of whether that person is a householder or a monastic. The goal is to develop *vairagya* towards the world and all sense-objects and to develop an affinity to God and spiritual life.

In the *Bhagavadgita*, Sri Krishna asserts that the mind can be controlled only by *vairagya* and *abhyasa*, regular practice. *Patanjali* in his *Yoga Sutra* stresses the importance of *vairagya*, non-attachment, as integral to the control of the mind or to the achievement of the cessation of thought-vibrations in the mind. The king-turned-sage *Bhartrihari* wrote one hundred verses on *vairagya* titled *Vairagya Shatakam*. There is hardly any treatise on spirituality in Sanatana Dharma that does not talk about *vairagya*.

There are different kinds of *vairagya*. *Shmashana vairagya*, cremation-ground dispassion or *markata vairagya*, monkey dispassion are examples of a disinterestedness in worldly affairs arising out of some suffering in life. Once the effect of suffering dissipates or when a solution out of that suffering appears, this dispassion vanishes.

# TRADITIONAL TALES

## *Sri Krishna and Karna*

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY of the Mahabharata War had ended. The great warrior Karna was also slain on the battleground. Great celebrations were underway in the Pandava camp rejoicing the defeat and end of Karna. At this joyous hour, Sri Krishna, who was instrumental in Pandava's victory, was sitting with great worry and was muttering to himself: 'Today, this world has lost a great giver.'

Yudhishthira never felt jealous no matter how much anyone or anyone's good qualities were praised. However, Arjuna was greatly saddened to hear Sri Krishna praising his arch-enemy, Karna, and hence Arjuna sat with a crestfallen face. Seeing Arjuna's plight, Sri Krishna said to him: 'Arjuna! It seems that you consider that I am unnecessarily praising Karna. Do a thing: come with me now. Just stand at a distance and watch what goes on. The great giver Karna has not yet died. His life is hanging by a thread. However, one can see his great quality of giving in charity even in this condition.'

Night fell. The battleground was hounded by jackals feeding on the dead warriors. Some people were sobbing here and some were wailing there. Broken pieces of weapons, pieces of arrows, mounds of corpses, ground muddied by blood—all these turned the battleground into a terrible place. Sri Krishna asked Arjuna to stand at a distance, disguised himself as a brahmana, approached Karna and said to him in a loud voice: 'Karna! The great benefactor Karna! Are you here?' Sri Krishna was walking saying these words loudly. Karna, who was lying on the ground unconscious, lifted his head and asked:

'Who is that? Who is calling me? Who are you, brother? Where are you?'

The brahmana came near Karna and said: 'I have come to you with great hopes. I want some gold. It would be enough if you could give even a little.' Karna said: 'Sir, please go to my house. My wife will give you sufficient gold and wealth.' Were it an ordinary brahmana, he would have gone to Karna's house as instructed by Karna. However, this was no ordinary brahmana. Hence, he feigned anger and said to Karna: 'If you do not want to give, you could say so! Why are you making me go hither and thither? I will not go anywhere. It would be enough even if I get two mustard-sized pieces of gold. I will not go anywhere for this.'

Karna thought for a while and then said to the brahmana: 'Sir, some gold has been put on my teeth. Kindly take it.' Hearing these words, the brahmana's face shrank in aversion, and he angrily said: 'Are you not ashamed to ask a brahmana to pull the teeth of a person?' Karna was in a fix. What could he do? He looked here and there and found a small rock nearby. With great difficulty he crawled to that rock and struck his teeth against the rock. The teeth broke. He took them in his hands and offering them to the brahmana, said: 'Sir, please accept these now.'

Seeing the teeth, the brahmana said: 'Good lord! These are unholy bones soaked in blood!' Saying so, the brahmana stepped back a couple of steps in revulsion. With great pain, Karna scraped off the gold from the teeth with a knife. Still, the brahmana refused to accept the

gold. Karna asked him to hand over Karna's bow, which the brahmana refused to do. Karna crawled to his bow. With great difficulty, he set an arrow on the bow with this head, and shot it invoking Varuna, the deity of water, the weapon being called *varuna-astra*. That arrow caused rainfall, which cleaned the teeth in Karna's hands and blood was completely washed off the gold. Then, Karna offered the gold to the brahmana with a humble request to accept the gift.

The very next moment, Sri Krishna, who had come in the guise of a brahmana, revealed his true form and said: 'Karna! Ask what you wish!' Arjuna was greatly ashamed. He stood still at his place. This was what Karna said: 'When the ruler of the three worlds, you, have come before me at the hour of my death, what should I ask and why?' Karna left his mortal coil, laying his head at the feet of Sri Krishna. It was clear that the great benefactor Karna was no less in devotion.

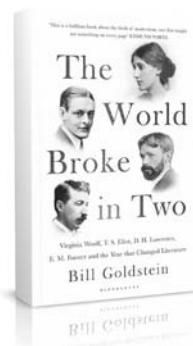
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*A Meeting of Sri Krishna and Karna*



# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



## ***The World Broke in Two: Virginia Woolf, T S Eliot, D H Lawrence, E M Forster, and the Year that Changed Literature***

Bill Goldstein

Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 31 Bedford Avenue, London, WC1B 3AT, UK. Website: <https://www.bloomsbury.com>. 2017. 368 pp. £22.50. HB. ISBN 9781408894583.

If one has not read A S Byatt's *Possessions* and Jeffrey Archer's 'Old Love' in his collection of short stories, *A Quiver Full of Arrows*, then one knows nothing of the joys of studying literature. We are speaking of the kind of life spent literary sleuthing chronicled by Noel Annan in his *The Dons: Mentors, Eccentrics, and Geniuses*. Few understand the joy the anonymous grammarian felt in his daily grind mentioned by Robert Browning in *A Grammarian's Funeral*. Archivists like Patricia Waugh, for instance, have schooled generations of students that it suffices like her to compile pastiches pretending that such hack-jobs are original contributions to the academic study of literature. Bill Goldstein mercifully, unlike Patricia Waugh and her acolytes, resists this culture of exhibitionism in the humanities and restores literary sleuthing to its proper place as an object of independent inquiry. Goldstein will be remembered for restoring literary studies to its pristine joy when Waugh and her type will be relegated to the dustbins of intellectual history.

*The World Broke in Two* is a tour de force in synoptic readings, in the lives and works, of Virginia Woolf, T S Eliot, D H Lawrence, and E M Forster during 1922. Goldstein has wisely chosen this hitherto overlooked year because:

'It is after all a grrreat litttterary [sic] period', Ezra Pound wrote to T. S. Eliot in January 1922.

This was a prophetic sentiment Eliot, or Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, or D. H. Lawrence, was unlikely to have shared at that moment. ... For these four authors, all among the major writers of the twentieth century, the year 1922 began, frighteningly, with a blank page even more starkly empty than usual because of personal travails and the open questions of form, style, and subject that haunted them all. Their shared questions were based in a shared fear: that a great (in plain English) literary period Pound foretold might be approaching, but it would pass them by (3).

Pound's sense of urgency cannot be understood today. Literature scholars have forgotten the need to teach their students 'form' and 'style'; instead, they valorise Lacanian arcana while teaching these authors to sophomores. Reading Goldstein's meticulously researched anecdotal book one understands the damage done to literary studies by poseurs who strut as litterateurs. Goldstein's works like Edward Mendelson's works exposes these poseurs for what they are. The Modernist Movement in British literature primarily arose out of an engagement with beauty and through the cultivation of personal relationships rather than from biased manifestos, which are taught with gusto all over the world. The Modernists wrote not because they wanted to be pseudo-philosophers but because they wanted to exorcise their inner demons.

Behind these four writers' creative struggles and triumphs and private dramas—nervous breakdowns, chronic illness, intense loneliness, isolation, and depression ... the difficulties of love and marriage and legal and financial troubles—lay a common spectral ghost: the cataclysm of World War I (6).

It is mistakenly believed that Sigmund Freud shaped the Modernist temper, but Goldstein in his care for details debunks that myth and shows how Freud affected the Modernist Movement. While

D H Lawrence reworked Freud's thesis on the unconscious; T S Eliot was unimpressed by Freud. Eliot preferred the more approachable Roger Vittoz. It was only Scofield Thayer, who in his prolonged therapy with Sigmund Freud can be said to have brought anything Freudian in the classically psychoanalytic sense to Modernism. Thayer, as Goldstein points out, was pivotal in T S Eliot's career. This fact continues to be unknown by most Eliot scholars. Through Wikipedia, they know of Pound's role in editing Eliot but are unaware of Thayer's role in shaping a whole generation of poets bringing Freud to these poets' lives by proxy.

Hermione Lee's monumental biography of Virginia Woolf is a queering of Woolf's life and works. Goldstein's appraisal of Woolf, on the other hand, is more reasonable:

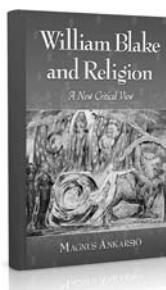
In February 1922, Virginia Woolf looked over her shoulder at her friends and rivals and remarked in her diary with a mix of admiration and awful surprise, 'How these writers live in their works—How ambition consumes them!' How right she was (2-3).

Goldstein proves that it was ambition and not any erotic horripilation, which informed the Modernists. They were more bothered with mundanities like sales of books and lecture tours than with say, Dadaism. It is only one lesser than them, Ezra Pound, who bothered, like all mediocre intellects, with manifestos and obscure treatises since Pound himself could not write anything worthwhile. Goldstein's book is an entertaining book, which is scholarly. In short, Goldstein's book is one of a kind and is essential reading for anyone in love with literature and literary studies.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

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**William Blake and Religion:  
A New Critical View**  
Magnus Ankarsjö

McFarland and Company, McFarland,  
960 NC Hwy 88 W, Jefferson NC  
28640, USA. Website: <https://mcfarlandbooks.com>. 2009. viii + 163  
pp. \$39.95. PB. ISBN 9780786445592.

Magnus Ankarsjö is merely novel in his approach to Blake studies and does not effect a paradigm change in Blake scholarship. The book under review is more of a polemical hotchpotch with irrelevant details thrown in. Ankarsjö, in his hurry to write, has not bothered to read the correspondence between Kathleen Raine and K D Sethna. His scholarship is limited to the old theme of Raine's reading of Blake as a Swedenborgian. This rebellious streak in Blake was not an accommodation of Blake's mother's Protestantism, but rather a rejection of all forms of hierarchical institutions for a more radical communion with YHWH, 'Yahweh'. This reviewer finds no merit in Ankarsjö's obsession with Blake's mother's involvement with Christianity. Instead, as Blake's corpus proves, he was a Kabbalist more than anything else. Blake is so original in his poetry and prose that Harold Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence cannot be applied to Blake's works. Therefore, what Ankarsjö believes to be important in Blake's oeuvre is only misguided scholarly architectonics. Ankarsjö's approach works rather well with William Wordsworth and Wordsworth's connection to his motherly sister, Dorothy. Blake is one of those rare poets who defy Freudian and Christian analyses.

Further, Blake was never involved in utopias as is understood today and by Ankarsjö. Ankarsjö's stress on the utopic Blake could be better applied to P B Shelley's projects of skewed utopias. Just because someone ferrets out some obscure details about a poet does not make that poet's poems a testimony to these discoveries. Literature is not archaeology or one of the social sciences that one has to force read poems from particular biases. Blake scholarship has only a sense of an ending but certainly not the ending envisaged by Ankarsjö.

This is a book not worth its publisher's good name. Neither is it a sourcebook for students. This book will be relegated to the morass of history. Ankarsjö does not have the critical faculty for understanding that Blake's oceanic experiences are more akin to *nirvikalpa* samadhi than to utopic ecstasies.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

# MANANA

**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.  
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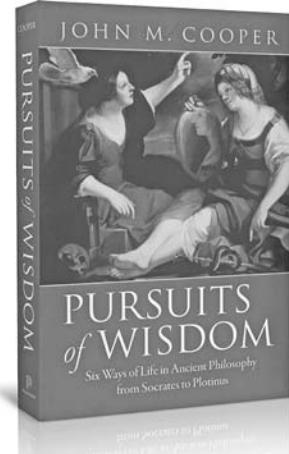
## **Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus**

John M Cooper

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. 2013. xiv + 442 pp. \$24.95. PB. ISBN 9780691159706.

PHILOSOPHY IS A SUBJECT OF STUDY. In this, it is just like physics, mathematics, French language and literature, anthropology, economics, and all the other established specialties in contemporary higher education. Undergraduate institutions everywhere have departments of philosophy offering degrees in the subject. These departments are staffed with lectures and professors with advanced degrees certifying their preparation as teachers and as professional philosophers—as people who pursue research in the field and write articles and books of philosophy and on philosophy, just as physics lecturers do physics and write on physics, or anthropologists do and write on anthropology. In fact, this book is just such a book of philosophy, written by a professional philosopher and teacher in philosophy.

But, even as a subject of study, philosophy is different from all these others. One indication of this is the fact—often a cause of frustration, even irritation, in professional philosophers when confronted by it—that in the popular imagination, and even among many beginning students, a philosopher is often conceived simply as someone who has a wide and deep experience of human life and insight into its problems. In this view, a philosopher is supposed to be a wise person, full of good advice on what to value in



life most and what is worth valuing less, on how to deal with adversity and how to develop and sustain a balanced and harmonious, properly human, outlook on life, one's own and others'. So professional philosophers are often vaguely thought of—until closer acquaintance dissipates this idea—as especially wise people, with deep knowledge of human life and its problems. Moreover, the connection of philosophy to wisdom about human life is also reflected in the prevalence nowadays of the idea of a 'philosophy of life', and in the attribution of a 'philosophy' to pretty much anyone who seems to have some consistent set of ideas about what to value and strive for in life, and can at least claim they are guiding their own choices and courses of action with them. But people speak of their own 'philosophy of life' with no thought of professional philosophy, or of philosophy as a subject of study, as any sort of source or foundation for it. On the contrary, a 'philosophy of life' is felt to be such a personal thing that its status as a philosophy might seem degraded if it were subject to validation by—let alone if it resulted from—rigorous study within an intellectual discipline having its own principles and its standards of evidence and argument. Your personal commitment and your resulting strength in leading your life are proof enough, or so people seem to feel.

Even so, there are ties linking these popular ideas about philosophy to the subject of study that is pursued and taught in philosophy departments by professional philosophers. Indeed, I believe that these ideas reflect something deeply ingrained in philosophy from early on in its origins (for us in the European intellectual tradition) in ancient Greece, even if this may not be prominent in contemporary philosophy today. In antiquity, beginning with Socrates, as I will argue in this book, philosophy was widely pursued as not just the best guide to life but as both the intellectual basis and the *motivating force* for the best human life: in the motto of the US undergraduate honor society Phi Beta Kappa (even if ΦΒΚ never understood it in quite the ways the ancient philosophers did), for these philosophers, philosophy is itself the best steersman or pilot of a life (*βιουκυβερνήτης*). Over most of the one thousand years of philosophy in ancient Greece and Rome, philosophy was assiduously studied in every generation by many ancient philosophers and their students as the best way to become good people and to live good human lives. That history has left its mark in these popular ideas.

Indeed, one aspect of ancient philosophy as a way of life has survived intact in philosophy nowadays: the prominence among the philosophy's varied subfields of ethics or moral philosophy. When Socrates introduced this ancient ambition for philosophy, he notoriously did so by shifting his focus away from the study of the world of nature in general to specifically that of human nature and human life. He established ethics or moral philosophy as one part of the subject (for him, in fact, his sole interest). As it has been practiced since the Renaissance—and things were not so very different for philosophy in ancient Greece and Rome—philosophy is traditionally conceived as composed of three

branches, namely, metaphysical philosophy, natural philosophy, and moral philosophy. It is true that these traditional terms, especially 'natural philosophy', are somewhat out of fashion nowadays. Philosophers today speak of philosophy of science instead. Other established specialties not easily brought under any of these principal headings are recognised, too (logic, philosophy of language, philosophy of art, and so on). In ancient philosophy, from the time of the Stoics and Epicureans, the standard *διαλεκτική, φυσική, ἡθική* prevailed—that is, dialectic (which included logic, philosophy of language, and epistemology), philosophy of nature ('physics'), and ethics. What stands out in all these divisions of the subject—is the enduring presence of ethics, or moral philosophy as it is also called, as one of the three principal components of philosophy.

In the ancient scheme 'ethics' or *ἡθική* meant the philosophical study of human moral character, good and bad, and of the determinative function in structuring a person's life that their character was assumed to have—character being their particular, psychologically fixed and effective, outlook on human life, and on the differing weight and worth in a life of the enormously varied sorts of valuable things that the natural and the human worlds make available to us. In fact, the alternative term 'moral philosophy' itself has its origin in Cicero's decision (in the first century BCE) to render the Greek *ἡθική* with his own coinage, *moralis*, meaning in Latin essentially the same thing: the philosophical study of moral character. Contemporary moral philosophy or ethics is different, as a result of the long development of human cultures since antiquity, and correspondingly of changed bases for philosophical reflections upon our human circumstances, and as a result of changed conceptions internal to philosophy itself as to what philosophy can, and cannot, reasonably hope to accomplish. 

# REPORTS



Temple Consecration, Asansol



Souvenir Release at Rajkot

## National Youth Day Celebrations

The Belur Math headquarters, jointly with Saradapitha, and the following centres celebrated National Youth Day, 12 January 2019, with great enthusiasm, holding various programmes such as processions, youths' conventions, speeches, and cultural competitions: **Aalo**, **Agartala**, **Antpur**, **Aurangabad**, **Bengaluru**, **Bhubaneswar**, **Chandigarh**, **Chapra**, **Chennai Math**, **Chennai Mission Ashrama**, **Chennai Students' Home**, **Cooch Behar**, **Dibrugarh**, **Gadadhar Ashrama**, **Gurap**, **Guwahati**, **Hatamuniguda**, **Hyderabad**, **Indore**, **Itanagar**, **Jalpaiguri**, **Jammu**, **Jamtara**, **Jhargram**, **Kadapa**, **Kailashahar**, **Kalady**, **Kamarpukur**, **Kankurgachhi**, **Kanpur**, **Kayamkulam**, **Khetri**, **Kochi**, **Kozhikode**, **Lalgarh**, **Limbdi**, **Lucknow**, **Madurai**, **Manasadwip**, **Mangaluru**, **Medinipur**, **Mekhliganj**, **Mumbai**, **Mysuru**, **Nagpur**, **Naora**, **Narottam Nagar**, **Nattarampalli**, **Pala**, **Ponnampet**, **Pune**, **Puri Mission**, **Purulia**, **Rahara**, **Raipur**, **Rajamahendravaram**, **Rajkot** (and its sub-centre **Ahmedabad**), **Ranchi Sanatorium**, **Rishikesh**, **Salem**, **Sargachhi**, **Sarisha**, **Seva Pratishtan**, **Sikra-Kulingram**, **Swamiji's Ancestral House**, **Taki**, **Tamluk**, **Tirupati**, **Varanasi Home of Service**, and **Vijayawada**.

**Chennai Math**, in association with a few other organisations, conducted a football championship in which 45 teams from 4 districts of Tamil Nadu took part. The winners were awarded prizes in the programme held on 12 January.

Sri Tathagata Roy, Governor of Meghalaya, among others, addressed the meeting conducted by **Shillong** centre on 12 January.

**Narainpur** centre held a large procession on 12 January in which about 10,000 people took part. In the public function held on the occasion,

Sri Bhupesh Baghel, Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, and several other dignitaries participated.

Cultural competitions were held by the following centres: 1. **Aurangabad**: 4,459 students from 188 schools and colleges participated; 2. **Madurai**: 8,312 students from 80 schools and colleges participated; 3. **Nagpur**: 3,618 students from 49 schools in 33 villages participated; 4. **Rajkot**: 8,500 students from 173 schools and colleges participated.

## Commemoration of the 125th Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's Addresses at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, USA

The following centres held programmes mentioned against their names: **In India**: **Baranagar Math**: A youths' conference on 26 January in which 267 students participated. **Barisha**: A devotees' convention on 13 January in which some 1,400 people took part. **Hyderabad**: Lectures and cultural competitions in 40 government schools from 15 November to 31 December involving about 6,300 students. A special lecture on 22 December, attended by nearly 400 law students of different colleges in Hyderabad. **Indore**: A youths' convention on 30 December in which about 900 youths participated. **Institute of Culture, Gol Park**: A seminar on 'Swami Vivekananda's Message for the Youth' on 7 and 8 January in which about 250 people participated. **Kamarpukur**: A spiritual retreat on 6 January which was attended by 1,550 devotees. **Mangaluru**: Lectures at 14 colleges in Mangaluru, which were attended by about 4,400 youths. **Pune**: Three youths' conventions in Nashik district on 17 and 18 January in which 950 tribal youths participated. **Sarisha**:

A convention for devotees and youths on 25 December, attended by 220 people. **Vijayawada:** A symposium on personality development on 29 December, attended by 315 students, and a teachers' convention on 30 December, attended by 170 teachers. **Outside India:** **Chandpur, Bangladesh:** A procession and a public meeting on 4 January, attended by about 1,500 people. **Durban, South Africa:** Special lectures at six places between 9 and 17 January, attended by about 800 people in all. **Netherlands:** A programme of talks, music, and video shows in Eindhoven city on 28 January. **Phoenix, South Africa:** Special lectures at Phoenix and Johannesburg on 7 and 19 January, attended by about 410 people. **Singapore** centre held a classical music programme on 25 November, attended by nearly 150 people.

### **News of Branch Centres**

The concluding phase of **Ramakrishna Mission Boys' Home, Rahara**'s platinum jubilee was held from 25 December to 1 January with a procession, a devotees' convention, cultural events, and so on. A fair held on the occasion was visited by several thousand people. The General Secretary addressed a meeting held on 25 December.

Foundation stones were laid for two new buildings for Dhanya Ganga Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Sargachhi** on 28 December, the sacred birthday of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. The KVK was started recently under the aegis of Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute (RKMVERI), Belur.

An English-medium primary school was inaugurated at **Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Garbeta** on 2 January.

**Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Malda** held the following programmes from 2 to 6 January to mark the platinum jubilee of its Vidyamandira, higher secondary

school: a procession, a public meeting, two seminars, an alumni meet, an inter-school quiz competition, and a number of cultural events. A book on the history of the school and a commemorative volume were also released on this occasion.

**Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Kamarpukur** held a *kisan mela*, farmers' fair, on 8 and 9 January, about 600 farmers visited.

**Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishtan, Kolkata**, conducted a round-the-clock medical camp during Makar Sankranti Mela at Sagar Island in South 24-Parganas district from 10 to 16 January. In all, 9,025 patients were treated, out of which 35 received indoor medical care. On 25 January, the foundation stone for the six-storey monks' quarters at Seva Pratishtan was laid and two renovated seminar halls, namely 'Virajananda Hall' and 'Atmasthananda Hall', were inaugurated.

On the occasion of Gangasagar Mela, **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Manasadwip** held a camp at the Mela area from 11 to 16 January. In all, 606 pilgrims were given free board and lodging at the camp. In addition, free meals were served to about 3,000 non-resident pilgrims from 13 to 15 January. Discourses and devotional singing were also arranged in the camp.

**Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot** conducted cultural and sports competitions for the physically challenged children on 6 January, 300 school students participated. On 24 February, a souvenir on 'Swami Vivekananda and Gujarat' commemorating the 125th anniversary of Swamiji's visit to Gujarat was released by Shri Bhupendrasinh Chudasama, Minister of Education, Government of Gujarat. About 500 students, teachers, parents, and a number of dignitaries attended. On this occasion 6 state level and 96 district level toppers of the State level written quiz competition on Swami Vivekananda were awarded prizes. The competition was organised by the ashrama, in which 79,131 students of 994 schools of Gujarat participated.

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission consecrated the new Sri Ramakrishna Temple at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Asansol** on 20 January, the holy birthday of Swami Turiyanandaji Maharaj. As part of the consecration, public meetings, religious discourses, and cultural events were held from 19 to 21 January. Further, Swami Suvirananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the new building for ITI and coaching centre on 19 January. About 350 monks and 40,000 devotees attended the three-day programme.

81 patients were treated in the Chawama locality of Lusaka by **Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Lusaka, Zambia**, on 1 December.

Swami Suvirananda unveiled a statue of Swami Vivekananda at **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Dhaka** on 12 January. A number of dignitaries and about 3,000 devotees and well-wishers attended the programme.

The Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, presented the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award to Ramakrishna Mission in recognition of the Mission's service activities in South Africa. Sri Ram Nath Kovind, President of India, presented a citation and a medal to Swami Saradaprabhanchanda, head of **Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa, Phoenix** centre, South Africa, at a function held in Varanasi on 25 January.

### **Values Education and Youth Programmes**

**Baranagar Math** held a youths' convention for girls on 29 December, attended by 350 girl students.

**Chennai Math** conducted a teachers' orientation programme on 19 January in which 46 teachers of its two schools took part.

**Delhi** centre conducted a values education workshop in Delhi on 10 January which was attended by 263 principals.

**Gourhati** centre held a youths' convention

on 28 January which was attended by about 700 students and 45 teachers from 19 schools.

**Kailashahar** centre held values education programmes at six schools and colleges from 17 December to 12 January in which about 2,200 students and 100 teachers took part.

**Khetri** centre held six values education workshops in four schools and one college from 15 to 18 January in which 3,275 students and 95 teachers participated.

**Madurai** Math conducted a personality development camp on 19 January in which 115 students from a women's college took part.

**Mysuru** Ashrama held a written quiz competition on Swamiji from July to December in which about 44,000 students from 452 schools and colleges in Karnataka took part. State-level toppers were awarded prizes on 31 December. The ashrama also conducted a three-day residential youths' camp at Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education (RIMSE) in which 110 youths from different parts of Karnataka participated.

**Nagpur** Math conducted values education programmes in three engineering colleges of Nagpur and four schools of Gondia district between 17 and 19 January, which were attended by about 1,800 students in all.

**Rajkot** centre held five values education programmes between 3 and 17 January which were attended by 2,600 students.

**Salem** Ashrama conducted a values education programme at a college in Salem district on 21 and 22 January in which 200 students participated.

### ***Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign)***

**Coimbatore Mission Vidyalaya** conducted a cleaning drive on 15 December in which the Vidyalaya students cleaned a government office.

**Kamarpukur** centre held a cleanliness drive at its village on 30 December and 25 January.

**Lalgarh** centre cleaned Makar Sankranti Mela ground in Lalgarh on 26 January.

**Mangaluru** Ashrama launched the fifth phase of its cleanliness drive on 2 December and conducted the following activities in (a) December: (i) four cleanliness drives in Mangaluru involving 1,150 volunteers, and (ii) awareness campaigns for 20 days in which volunteers reached out to nearly 800 households in different parts of Mangaluru city, spreading awareness about cleanliness. (b) January: (i) four cleanliness drives in Mangaluru involving 1,450 volunteers, (ii) awareness campaigns for 25 days in which volunteers reached out to nearly 1,100 households in different parts of Mangaluru city, spreading awareness about cleanliness, (iii) six seminars in colleges covering about 3,500 youths, and (iv) cleanliness drives in 120 villages of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts in which about 16,850 people took part.

**Shillong** Ashrama held a cleanliness drive near its Vivekananda Cultural Centre on 12 January.

### **Relief**

**Winter Relief** : The following centres distributed blankets and winter garments, shown against their names, to needy people: **India**: **Aalo**: 45 blazers, 1,009 jackets, and 195 sweaters from 28 December to 9 January. **Antpur**: 1,300 blankets from 20 September to 16 December. **Baganchra** (under headquarters): 300 blankets on 6 December. **Bagda**: 200 from 25 November to 25 December. **Baghbazar**: 246 sweaters on 18 November. **Barisha**: 520 blankets from 8 to 31 December. **Belagavi**: 400 blankets on 29 and 30 December. **Belgharia**: 500 blankets and 124 shawls from 17 October to 25 January. **Chandigarh**: 270 blankets from 17 November to 20 December. **Cooch Behar**: 22 blankets and 9 sweaters on 27 January. **Deoghar**: 2,500 sweaters from 5 to 9 January. **Gadadhar Ashrama**: 205 blankets from 28 November to 30 December.

**Ghatshila**: 265 blankets and 284 winter garments from 10 December to 6 January. **Gourhati**: 1,561 sweaters and sweatshirts from 20 November to 30 December. **Guwahati**: 290 blankets from 10 to 19 January. **Imphal**: 500 blankets on 28 and 30 December. **Jaipur**: 300 blankets on 29 December. **Jalpaiguri**: 3,000 blankets from 22 December to 14 January. **Jammu**: 1,202 jackets from 9 May to 21 January. **Kailashahar**: 500 sweaters from 5 to 14 December. **Kamarpukur**: 2,175 blankets from 24 November to 29 January. **Karimganj**: 1,000 blankets from 23 December to 9 January. **Katihar**: 200 blankets from 30 December to 11 January. **Khetri**: 281 blankets and 1,133 sweaters from 15 December to 27 January. **Lucknow**: 1,035 blankets, 2,128 sweaters, and 2,872 sweatshirts from 9 December to 9 January. **Malda**: 630 blankets from 4 to 31 December. **Manasadwip**: 300 blankets from 9 to 22 December. **Narottam Nagar**: 2,001 sweaters from 18 December to 10 January. **New Delhi**: 700 blankets from 20 December to 21 January. **Puri Mission**: 1,000 blankets from 5 November to 31 December. **Rahara**: 867 blankets on 28 December. **Rajarhat Bishnupur**: 400 blankets from 29 December to 19 January. **Ramharipur**: 1,306 jackets and 894 sweatshirts from 9 October to 24 November. **Ranchi Morabadi**: 500 blankets from 28 November to 14 December. **Shimla**: 580 sweaters, 670 jackets and sweatshirts, and 555 socks and mufflers from 12 June to 24 December. **Sikra-Kulingram**: 573 sweaters and jackets from 25 November to 6 January. **Silchar**: 1,100 blankets from 14 December to 14 January. **Srinagar**: 400 blankets from 11 November to 11 December. **Varanasi Advaita Ashrama**: 35 jackets from 19 November to 30 December. **Vrindaban**: 334 blankets on 29 December and 1 January. **Bangladesh**: (a) **Chandpur**: 156 blankets from 2 to 27 January. (b) **Comilla**: 100 blankets on 28 December. (c) **Dhaka**: 166 blankets on 12 and 21 January.



# Appeal

## for Financial Help for Constructing 'Publication & Research Centre'

Namaste.

'Sri Ramakrishna Math' situated at Puranattukara near Thrissur city in Kerala is a branch of 'Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission'. Established as early as 1927 with a Gurukulam (hostel) for educating the poor Harijan children of the locality, this branch of the Ramakrishna Movement has since been tirelessly serving the society in a number of areas including valueeducation, healthcare, propagation of Dharma, publication of Vedantic texts and spiritual ministration.



The Publication Dept. of this Math has published 300-odd books. By its unique service of decades, this Publishing House has contributed to the material and spiritual progress of the society. Although it has developed over the years, its infrastructure has not developed in line with the increase in the volume of work and the Dept. now works under spatial constraints.

It is under these circumstances that we plan to build a 4-storeyed 'Publication and Research Centre', estimated to cost Rs. 6 crores. The new building will house the Publication Godown, Despatch Office, Publications Office (Books Section), Prabuddhakeralam Magazine Office, Public Library, Research Section, Living Rooms for Monks and Guests etc.

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Swami Sadbhavananda  
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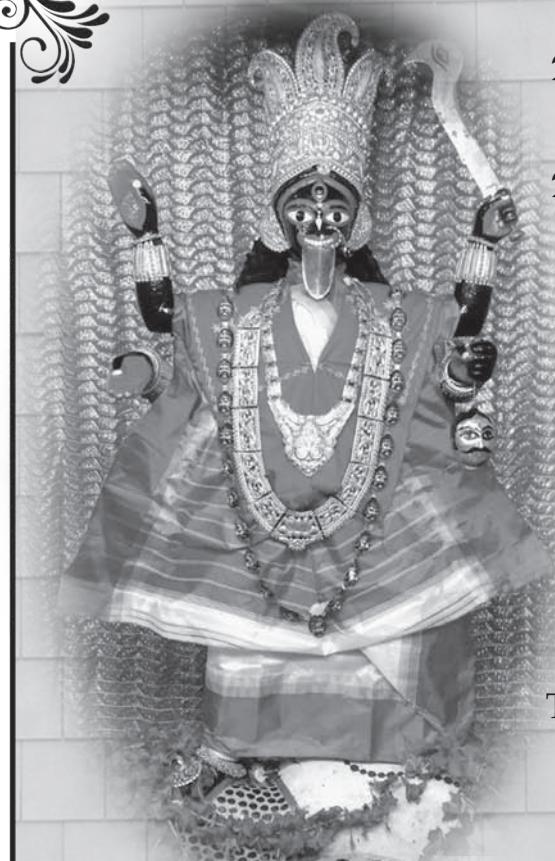
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Dear Ma,

*Thank you for wonderful  
Darshan.*

*With loving pranams,*

*Ferdos, Valerie,  
Nahid and Tamara  
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Thanthania Kalibari Temple is more than 300 years. Sri Ramakrishna visited here on several occasions to pray for the welfare of Keshab Sen.



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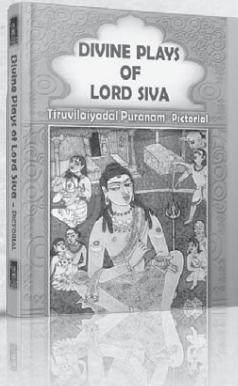
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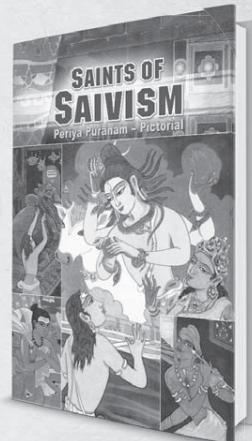
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*We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.*

*Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.*

*Swami Vivekananda*

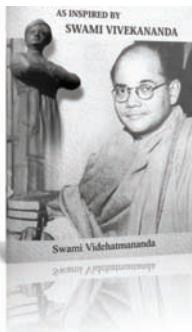


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## An Appeal

Dear Devotees,

Please accept our greetings and best wishes.

The temple at Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Nettayam, Thiruvananthapuram was constructed between 1916 and '24. Revered Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj, the spiritual son of Sri Sri Takkur and the first President of Ramakrishna Math, laid the foundation stone of this Ashrama in 1916 and Revered Swami Nirmalanandaji Maharaj consecrated it in 1924. Revered Swami Vijnananandaji Maharaj, another direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna had visited this Ashrama and got Sri Sri Takkur's vision in the shrine. The Ashrama is located on a hilltop at Nettayam in Trivandrum. This hundred year old Ashrama is an ideal place for worship, japa and meditation and an inspiration for sincere spiritual aspirants. Many senior monks of Ramakrishna Math had stayed and did tapasya here. Devotees visiting this serene, calm and holy place feel a spiritual current and often expressed it.

Due to ageing this important shrine is in a dilapidated condition and often leaks at multiple places during monsoon and as such a thorough revamping of the roof and other parts of the structure including the rubble construction is required to be done immediately to preserve it for posterity. The repair & renovation project will cover civil, electrical and structural work is estimated to cost rupees 52 lakhs. Ashrama has to mobilize this amount immediately for completing this noble work as early as possible so that the next all Kerala Sri Ramakrishna Devotees' Conference in May, 2019 can be held in the renovated Ashrama.

We earnestly request you to donate generously for this holy endeavor and be blessed by Sri Ramakrishna.

Praying for the blessings of the Holy Trio,

5<sup>th</sup> December, 2018

Yours in Sri Ramakrishna,  
Swami Mokshavratananda,  
Adhyaksha.

Donations may be sent in favor of "Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Thiruvananthapuram" in the above address or deposited in any of the following bank accounts directly with an sms to (mob)8289916882.

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## PILGRIM'S GUIDE TO THE HOLY TRIO IN KOLKATA



### Swami Vivekananda Visits Pashupati Basu's House

Let us travel back to the morning of February 19, 1897. Upon his return from the West and subsequent triumphal return in Chennai, Swamiji took a steamer S S Mombasa and reached Budge Budge at night, and the following morning boarded a special train for Sealdah. Upon arriving in Sealdah with Captain and Ms. Sevier and being greeted with a hero's welcome by more than 20,000 people, he was taken to Ripon College by horse carriage. From there, the enthusiastic youth decided to unharness the horses and pull the horse carriage up to Pasupati Nath's house, shouting 'Jai Swamiji'. In spite of this heroic welcome, Swamiji was unaffected and his inner attitude of humility would reveal itself whenever he met any of his guru-bhais. At the front gate (pictured below), Swamis Brahmananda and Yogananda were present and garlanded Swamiji. Swamiji immediately made pranams to the both of them saying, 'The son of the guru is like the Guru himself'. Swami Brahmananda then made pranams to Swamiji replying, 'The elder brother is the

same as one's father'. Then Master Mahasay made pranams to Swamiji, and Swamiji told him, 'My friend'. In one corner, Hutko Gopal sat on a bench. Seeing him, Swamiji said, 'Oh Hutko, I am that same Naren. Why do you hide yourself, come here. I have not forgotten Bengali'. After a short discussion, Swamiji went upstairs and was greeted by Girish Chandra Ghose. Here Girish tried to make pranams to Swamiji, but Swamiji immediately caught hold of his hand and say, 'Oh G.C., this will be inauspicious for me. Saying "Jai Ram" to your Ramakrishna, I was able to cross the ocean.' Looking at Swamiji, Girish Chandra Ghose's entire body was so overwhelmed with joy that he was simply unable to speak. Then Swamiji took Master Mahasay into a side room and revealed his secret: 'All this you see regarding the conquering of the West, I am only Thakur's instrument. He only sent me. And the hint which was given by Thakur, Holy Mother knew of it. I sought her permission and mandate to go. By Mother's blessing, all obstacles were cut and I could go to the West—amongst the big scholars, wise people, scientists...before thousands of men and women—and stand out.'



Front gate entrance of Basubati house



Frontal view of Basubati house

*In memory of Dr Rina Bhar –Gopal Chandra Bhar*



*The best guide in life is strength. In religion, as in all other matters, discard everything that weakens you, have nothing to do with it.*

—Swami Vivekananda



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